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New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Lieutenant General Mompati Merafhe, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Botswana.

Mr. Merafhe (Botswana): Let me begin by congratulating you, Madam, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. Your election is a demonstration of the trust and confidence placed in you and your country, the Kingdom of Bahrain, by the international community.

I would also seize this opportunity to pay tribute to your illustrious predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson of the Kingdom of Sweden, for his sound leadership and achievements during the sixtieth session.

Additionally, let me commend the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his decade of devoted and selfless service to humanity. This great son of Africa, with his visionary leadership of the United Nations, has provided, and continues to provide, the embodiment of our collective aspirations to achieve a more peaceful, just, equitable and prosperous world. He is indeed Africa's great gift to humanity.

Within the next five days, Botswana will mark 40 years of its existence as a democratic, independent and sovereign nation.

When the first President of Botswana, the late Sir Seretse Khama, addressed the Assembly on 24 September 1969, he described Botswana, in part, as a country faced with a problem of underdevelopment of classic proportions.

Botswana had to contend with the harsh realities of its history and geographical position. We were completely surrounded by oppressive, aggressive and racist white minority regimes. As a small, weak and poor country, we had to begin the process of building national institutions and laying the foundation for social and economic development in a very hostile environment. The United Nations and its Member States served as a pillar of strength and gave us political and diplomatic support.

Standing here today, we express our deep gratitude for the support and assistance extended to us over the years. It has been a 40-year journey of determined and sustained effort to achieve human-centred development.

It is a journey we have travelled with development partners from all continents. This has enabled us to achieve some measure of progress in improving the human condition. At 40, we are an adult nation and have assumed full ownership of and responsibility for our own development. We have adopted policies, legislation and practices aimed at

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creating an environment conducive to economic growth and development.

Many milestones have been achieved in our national development effort. Today, Botswana is a middle-income developing country, but we still face enormous challenges for which we need assistance. In this regard, the decision of the 2005 World Summit should be implemented to ensure that small middle-income developing countries such as Botswana do not fall back into the doldrums of poverty and underdevelopment.

Botswana has been blessed with one of Africa's major natural resources: diamonds. It must be stated that 65 per cent of the world's diamonds, worth $8.3 billion per year, come from African countries. I am pleased to state that diamonds have done, and continue to do, good in Botswana. The diamond industry in Botswana has been at the cutting edge of human development and is transforming lives for the better, in all fields of human endeavour.

We continue to prudently manage the revenue from the sale of diamonds and to effectively use such revenue to educate our people, provide potable water and health care and build an infrastructure network, including roads, telephones and rural electrification. This is the good that diamonds have done and continue to do.

As a participant in the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, of which we currently hold the chairmanship, Botswana is strongly committed to working alongside other participating countries to maintain the credibility of the Scheme and the legitimate diamond trade. The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme is one of the best examples of global cooperation. The Scheme is the embodiment of global consensus, unrelenting political will and the determination of members to do the right thing, underpinned by strong support and the resolutions of the Security Council. That is important, because about 10 million people globally are either directly or indirectly supported by the diamond industry. In southern Africa, more than 28,000 people are employed by the industry.

We are also here to reaffirm our commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and our strong belief in the Organization as the only vehicle by means of which the enduring peace and prosperity of the human race can be assured. We welcome the opportunity for the nations of the world to meet here annually to exchange views on matters which are central to our common destiny.

There are many challenges which we must address. But chief among them is ending the evil of war. It is deeply regrettable that, although the human species left the jungle many, many years ago, the jungle remains in human beings. As a matter of fact, if the beasts of the jungle acquired language, they could actually claim some superiority over the human race. While animals may fight and brutally kill each other, they never spend time planning how to destroy one another or thinking about how to produce weapons of mass destruction.

Be that as it may, we still have hope and confidence in the human spirit to do good. As human beings, we have a shared destiny and we are therefore our own saviours.

The responsibility to save the human species from the scourge of war cannot be passed to anyone else. It is for that reason that we consider that this Assembly provides a rare opportunity for the international community to move beyond platitudes and to squarely address the critical challenges of our time.

An atmosphere of international peace and security is essential for human development. Experience has repeatedly shown that we cannot realistically hope to pursue a meaningful global development agenda under conditions of war, conflict and insecurity.

Conflicts in our world today should therefore be a matter of grave concern to all of us. In 2000, at the dawn of the new millennium, we gave an undertaking that, above all else, the twenty-first century should be an epoch of peace and prosperity. We consciously made a commitment to reduce by half by 2015 the number of the world's poor. If we are to achieve that objective, war should certainly be the first casualty.

Botswana is particularly concerned about conflicts in Africa. Regrettably, Africa is the only continent that is facing the bleak prospect of failing to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Can we really afford the resources for war in the midst of poverty, disease, deprivation and underdevelopment? The answer must obviously be a resounding "No".

Today, Africa is host to the largest number of refugees, displaced persons, global poor and people infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS. Yet, sadly, we have the lion's share of the world's conflicts. Ending conflicts is therefore as much a calling as it is a moral and political imperative.

We should all be concerned about the atrocities in the Darfur region of the Sudan. The perpetuation of that conflict, in defiance of the collective will of the international community and the Charter of the United Nations, is totally unacceptable. Worse still, the carnage of daily killings is an affront to the sanctity of human life. This undermines our humanity.

We call on all parties to the conflict to comply with and respect the Darfur Peace Agreement. Those who have not signed the Agreement must do so as a matter of urgency. It is only through dialogue and mutual accommodation that durable peace can be attained. War can beget only misery and anarchy.

The United Nations has expressed its desire to help, through the deployment of a multinational peacekeeping force. In principle, the African Union Peace and Security Council has welcomed the decision of the Security Council.

Every year we come to this rostrum to call for progress in the Middle East peace process. For generations that region has known no peace. If there is any lesson to be learned, it is that the only avenue to a lasting political settlement is through dialogue, accommodation and compromise. It is only in an atmosphere of negotiation that reason and common sense can prevail over extremism and war-mongering.

Israel and Palestine must coexist as sovereign States that share, not only a border, but a desire for peace, security and prosperity. We urge the people of the Middle East to summon up the courage to recognize the folly of war and accept the virtue of dialogue. They should start building a common future for generations that will know no violence and conflict, but only cooperation and concord.

My delegation shares the concern about the threat of terrorism. Terrorism pervades every crevice of our world, much to the detriment of humanity. In this respect, we welcome the recent adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) by the General Assembly.

When the Doha Ministerial Declaration was adopted in 2001, we had hoped for and envisaged negotiations lasting three years. We knew then, as we know today, that that was an ambitious and onerous undertaking. We have already missed several important deadlines. That should be a source of concern for all of us. For many of our people, a fair and equitable international trading system is not only a noble objective, but also a development imperative. It holds hope and promise of prosperity and the alleviation of poverty, which is all the more reason why we must not allow the Doha round of trade negotiations to fail.

The indefinite suspension of the Doha round of trade negotiations on 24 July 2006 has raised questions about our collective commitment to development. In this respect, the major question before us today is how we can revive the Doha round of trade negotiations. It took eight years to complete the Uruguay round. That goes to show that at times it is not how fast the negotiations are concluded but the substance and content of such negotiations. It is clear that we are going to miss the December 2006 deadline which we set for ourselves in 2005.

It is therefore our collective responsibility as the United Nations to give the necessary political direction to the World Trade Organization, not only to revive the negotiations, but also to ensure the necessary impetus for their timely and successful conclusion. A successful conclusion should address the ever-growing special development challenges of developing countries by upholding the development dimension of the Doha round.

During the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, a number of key decisions were made and were outlined in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1). Heads of State or Government called for the establishment of institutions with a view to making the United Nations more effective in carrying out its mandate under the Charter and in serving Member States better.

This session should be an implementation session; we must commit ourselves to collective implementation. It is important that we demonstrate in deeds that, here at the United Nations, we make statements to communicate thoughts, ideas and action plans. Such ideas are not to remain on paper; they must be translated into programmes and projects for the common good.

Botswana strongly supports comprehensive, wide and deep reform of the United Nations. Regarding the ongoing management reform, we welcome the decision, in resolution 60/283, to allow the Secretary-General adequate authority to deploy resources and staff from lower to higher priority programmes. We are convinced that as chief administrative officer, the Secretary-General should be accorded more leverage to command both human and financial resources so that the Secretariat can deliver more effectively. Member States must recognize the importance of timely and unconditional funding of the mandates entrusted to the Secretary-General by the legislative bodies of the Organization. It is incumbent upon the Secretariat to ensure accountability and the prudent management of such resources.

Enabling the Organization to effectively deliver is a collective responsibility of the Member States and the Secretariat. What is essential is for Member States to ensure that there are efficient oversight bodies to guarantee compliance with standing rules and regulations.

One of the major successes of the sixtieth session was the implementation of the World Summit decision on the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission. Africa expects the Peacebuilding Commission to effectively discharge its mandate.

The establishment of the Human Rights Council is also one of the significant achievements of the sixtieth session. It demonstrates our collective desire to elevate human rights to new heights of prominence and visibility consistent with the changing times. It is our expectation that the new body will operate on the basis of principles of cooperation, genuine interactive dialogue and tolerance coupled with respect for diversity. The importance of issues of development should not be underestimated. In developing countries, these issues are real challenges which should not be overlooked. The Human Rights Council must therefore address issues of capacity building and find ways of responding to institutional weaknesses and resource limitations which hamper the process of translating constitutional and statutory human rights provisions into reality.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Botswana's abiding faith in the utility and universality of the United Nations. The United Nations is nothing else but ourselves, the Member States, put together. It should be greater than the sum total of all of us. We must therefore have the courage to strengthen ourselves by following through with reforms, including the reform of the Security Council. The reform of the Security Council should not pose difficulties to anyone. We are all responsible for keeping this world safe.

It is only when Member States consider their national interests to be an integral part of the wider interests of the international community that they can set aside their apprehension with regard to a Security Council enlarged in both the permanent and non-permanent categories.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Come Zoumara, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Integration and la Francophonie of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Zoumara (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): As you know, Madam President, there is one African tradition, but its forms are many. That is why the African continent is the cradle of mankind and this African tradition universal. We can see this universal nature here in New York within this forum of the United Nations where the values of solidarity and brotherhood symbolize a common desire for peace and love.

How can we not fail today to recall the vitality which marked the World Summit which was held in 2005 in this very Hall, following the fifty-ninth session, which was undoubtedly the longest ever due to the intensity of the consultations begun by His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, President at that session, with a view to reaching a consensus on questions related to reform of our Organization, including that of the Security Council. Those questions divided, and continue to divide, delegations and regional groups, and finally overshadowed the discussion of other items.

But the Summit and the ensuing sixtieth session nonetheless had the merit of establishing the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission.

Despite all the differences among United Nations Members and despite the criticism of some of its actions, the United Nations remains the international organization which, due to its universality, representativity and authority, cannot be ignored. The Central African Republic, which reiterates its commitment to the purposes and principles of the

Charter, would like to reaffirm its ongoing desire to continue to contribute to all efforts to reform the entire United Nations system.

Having said that, I should like, on behalf of His Excellency General François Bozizé, President of the Republic, head of State, and on behalf of the Government and the people of the Central African Republic, to warmly congratulate you, Madam, on your election as President of the General Assembly at the present session. I view it as a sign of confidence and a well-deserved tribute to your beautiful country, the Kingdom of Bahrain. I am also pleased to express to your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, my high esteem for the remarkable way in which he led the work of the sixtieth session. In addition, I express my warm and sincere thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, a worthy son of the African tradition, for his praiseworthy and tireless efforts, in a particularly difficult international context, to promote the role of the Organization, to attain its objectives and to promote peace and security throughout the world.

The theme suggested for the present session is "Implementing a Global Partnership for Development". We should recall that, six years ago, the highest leaders of the Organization's Member States made the firm commitment to unite their efforts to collectively fight poverty and all the scourges it causes, which pose a serious threat to international peace and security and a major obstacle to the development processes in many countries.

In the Millennium Declaration, which resulted from that commitment, the 189 signatory countries — including the Central African Republic — solemnly pledged to do their utmost to overcome poverty, which continues to devastate the majority of the world's population. To that end, several Goals were defined.

Ms. Blum (Colombia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

As the Secretary-General has stated, the main Goals have been implemented to varying degrees:

> "Accordingly, we will not enjoy development without security, we will not enjoy security without development, and we will not enjoy either without respect for human rights. Unless all these causes are advanced, none will succeed" (*A/59/2005, para. 17*).

In the case of the Central African Republic, we must acknowledge that many challenges remain to be addressed if we are to truly strive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) within the agreed time frame. Indeed, my country experienced more than two decades of serious crises, from which we only recently emerged by holding general elections and establishing republican institutions and the Government of National Reconciliation. But we must still fight the cross-border insecurity raging in the subregion and push back out of our territory the aggressors, supported from abroad, who seek to destroy our democratically established republican institutions.

The Central African authorities are striving to restore security throughout the territory. It goes without saying that no development is possible unless we eradicate the endemic insecurity maintained by those who set up roadblocks and by the rebellion raging mainly in the north-eastern part of the country, bordering on the Sudan and Chad. The security and defence forces deployed in the back country face many difficulties — particularly logistical ones — in overcoming that phenomenon. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the subregion — due to the long crisis in Darfur and its effects on the Central African Republic — are hardly helping to put an end to that scourge.

The Central African Republic supports the proposals made by Presidents George Bush and Jacques Chirac and by the Chairperson of the African Union, Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, on the positioning of United Nations troops on the border between the Central African Republic, Chad and the Sudan.

In addition, since 2003, the Central African Republic, one of the seven countries in partnership with the World Bank's Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme, has taken a new comprehensive, integrated approach that is integrative and inclusive aimed at resolving the thorny problem of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. The results today reflect the Government's willingness to succeed in that process. Moreover, our country has just developed a new structure to fight the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, namely, a national commission against the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons and for disarmament.

The deteriorated state of the Central African economy is hardly likely to encourage the implementation of the Development Goals in order to promote a robust fight against poverty, which for us remains an ongoing threat to peace and stability.

In the area of finance, the Government has taken energetic measures to restore financial health by implementing an extensive system to monitor civil servants and establishing a body to verify their academic credentials.

The other challenges — just as great — facing the Central African Republic are those of health care and education, which are among the main MDGs. With respect to health care, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other diseases, such as tuberculosis and malaria, are sources of concern for our country.

The recent conference on AIDS, held here at United Nations Headquarters in early June 2006, highlighted the particularly disturbing characteristics of that calamity among the most impoverished sectors of the population: women and children. There is a health emergency, and thus the Central African Republic is requesting greater assistance and action from its development partners.

The education and training sector — covered by Goal 2 of the MDGs — has undoubtedly been the main victim of the long period of political and military crises, whose wounds are gradually healing. The many empty years of discouragement resulting from the loss of motivation on the part of the teaching staff, delayed salary payments, the lack of State resources to build schools and purchase equipment, and the continued insecurity in some areas of the country for the past several years — all of that has led to a decline in the quality of teaching and a drop in the literacy rate.

However, since the burst of patriotism of 15 March 2003, the Government has been doing its utmost to ensure that the school year will no longer be interrupted and to restore the former credibility of the Central African educational system. Thanks to the assistance of certain donors — among which we must mention the International Organization of la Francophonie — the Central African Republic is beginning to take up the challenge between now and 2015. Indeed, it will not be possible to ensure that democracy and a culture of dialogue and tolerance are firmly established unless the people have access to quality education and are able to grasp what is truly at stake, and thus make sound judgements in full knowledge of the facts.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals Report 2005 highlights the need to ensure a sustainable environment by intelligently exploiting natural resources and protecting the ecosystems upon which the survival of humanity depends. Climate change and global warming owing to the depletion of the ozone layer are worrisome phenomena for our country, whose northern region is being increasingly overtaken by desert. The initiatives set out in the Kyoto Protocol show that progress is possible if there is political will on the part of the major consumers.

If we are to prevent and reduce the risks related to natural disasters and to equip ourselves with better organization and more effective means to make the world safer, we must support the transformation of the United Nations Environmental Programme into a specialized agency with a broader mandate, as proposed by France.

Despite delays in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Central African Republic is determined to reach them, especially Goals 3 and 4, relating to the empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality and to the reduction of under-five mortality. Indeed, considerable progress has been made in terms of vaccination coverage and also with respect to the free distribution of mosquito nets to pregnant women and to children under the age of 5.

The Central African Republic greatly appreciates the proposals made during the 2005 World Summit by Presidents Chirac, Lula Da Silva and Hu Jintao regarding the promotion of peace, security and development.

However, the results of MDG implementation will remain mixed until international solidarity fully plays its part. We live in an interdependent world; the development of the Central African Republic is closely linked to that of the rest of the world, because the United Nations is a community of nations.

May God bless the United Nations. May God bless the Central African Republic.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vartan Oskanian, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia.

Mr. Oskanian (Armenia): Let me congratulate Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election to the presidency and wish her a year relatively free of conflict crisis and catastrophe — in other words, a year unlike the one we have just had, during which His Excellency Jan Eliasson significantly contributed to the successful navigation of troubled waters with his great leadership. The "year of turmoil", as he called it (see A/60/PV.100), included conflicts and crises, as well as man-made and natural disasters, all requiring our collective response. We have responded with great commitment to maintain peace and stability in the world.

Of the conflicts that we have faced in this past year, the one that emerged to be the most tragic was that of the war in Lebanon. I believe the international community has lost some credibility and moral authority in the eyes of the peoples of the world, who watched the Security Council bicker over minute issues while bombs were being dropped in Lebanon and innocent people were being killed. It was a great shame for the international community not to be able to deliver and establish an immediate ceasefire. When an international body loses moral authority, our ability to effectively tackle problems and issues that require a collective response is certainly undermined.

In other areas, however, the collective efforts of the international community have indeed succeeded. I believe we played a role in the civilized process of bringing Montenegro to this day and to this body. Collectively, we created and empowered the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, two bodies that hold great promise for delivering deeper and more profound commitment on the part of the world community to building peace and protecting human rights.

The most threatening challenges in the world remain those of poverty and hopelessness. When our leaders gathered in this Hall six years ago, they decided that the United Nations was the most effective body in which to address the ills facing our societies. They collectively recognized their responsibility to deliver, worldwide, more equitably distributed social and economic development, at an accelerated pace. They said to the world that they were willing to channel international processes and multilateral resources in order to tackle the needs of the world's poor. They will be judged by their adherence to the principle, promise and commitment of collective action. Six years have now passed and the world still earnestly looks on to see whether individual and regional interests can be overcome and those problems jointly addressed.

We in Armenia also face similar problems. We are encouraged and rewarded by the extensive political and economic reforms that we have conducted over the past 10 years. The results are evident. We are now preparing to engage in the second generation of political and economic reforms in order to continue to build on the past decade of progress. We are moving forward on legislative and administrative matters; we are today a more democratic society and a more open and more liberal economy. We have been registering double-digit growth over the past six years.

While we are encouraged by this economic progress and the positive macroeconomic indicators, we are now turning our attention to the rural areas in order to eradicate poverty in our society. We are reminded of the remarkable promise, made in 2000, to the victims of global poverty to "free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty" (*resolution 55/2, para. 11*). To be able to do that in Armenia, we will leverage the philanthropy of international organizations and friendly countries with the traditional generosity of our diaspora, so that we can build and repair infrastructure and thus create new conditions for economic development and social change. But we also understand that infrastructure alone is not enough to introduce that kind of change that reduces poverty. We need to invest in people; we need to invest in women and children; and we need to educate them and train them for the future.

We will begin that programme in Armenia's border villages. Unlike other countries, where border villages are points of interaction and activity, Armenia's eastern and western borders are closed, thus stifling economic interaction and regional cooperation. With our neighbour, Turkey, it is not only economic cooperation that suffers, but also the dialogue between our two peoples. Turkey's insistence on keeping the border closed and not allowing interaction between the two communities freezes the memories of yesterday, instead of promoting dialogue and interaction to create new experiences and new memories for tomorrow. We still believe and hope that Turkey will eventually understand that keeping the border closed until there is harmony and mutual understanding between our two

peoples is not a policy. On the contrary, it is avoidance of a responsible policy to forge and promote regional cooperation and economic development at a time and in a region that are the object of growing global attention.

Let me address the issue of Kosovo, as many have done from this podium. We closely follow the process of self-determination in Kosovo because we Armenians, ourselves, are extremely supportive of the process of self-determination for the people of Nagorno Karabakh. But we do not draw parallels between the two conflicts or with any other conflict. We believe and insist that conflicts are all different, and each must be decided on its own merits. While we ourselves do not consider the Kosovo outcome to be a precedent for other conflicts, we are extremely anxious about the possibility that it may raise artificial obstacles for other self-determination movements, simply because others cite it as a precedent. This is of extreme concern to us because we believe that there are movements in the world today that have earned the right to self-determination. The Kosovo outcome should not serve as an excuse or reason to put a damper on those self-determination movements.

Yet, such attempts are already apparent in this Hall as the principle of self-determination is being undermined compared to other principles. But this goes contrary to the lessons of history. There is a reason that the Helsinki Final Act enshrined the principle of self-determination as equal among other principles in international relations. In international interactions, just as in human relations, there are no absolute values. There are also responsibilities. A State should gain and earn the right to govern. States have the responsibility to protect their own citizens, and the people have the right to choose the Government that they think should govern them.

The people of Nagorno Karabakh decided long ago not to be represented by the Government of Azerbaijan, because they suffered from State violence. They tried to protect themselves, and they succeeded against all odds, only to hear the State cry foul and claim sovereignty and territorial integrity. But Azerbaijan has lost every iota of the moral right to talk about guaranteeing the security of the people of Nagorno Karabakh, let alone to claim custody over that people.

Azerbaijan did not act responsibly or morally towards the people of Nagorno Karabakh, people that it considered to be its own citizens. It unleashed military action; it sanctioned pogroms and massacres in urban areas. It bombed and displaced more than 300,000 Armenians. When it lost the war and accepted a ceasefire, it began to destroy all traces of Armenians by eliminating Armenian monuments throughout the territory. Over the past two years, the remaining 2,000 carved stone crosses, representing Armenian cemeteries, were desecrated and eliminated. The territory has now been turned into a shooting range for the Azerbaijani army. This reflects the fact that Azerbaijan still does not believe in the peaceful resolution of this conflict.

Armenians cannot be blamed for thinking that Azerbaijan is not serious about a peaceful solution. Having rejected the past two offers of the international community, Azerbaijan is now concerned about being accused of rejecting the current peace plan. That is why it is manoeuvring and manipulating every possible situation — from State violence to introducing resolutions in other forums outside the peace process so that the Armenians are forced to do the rejecting.

But Armenia is clearly on record as stating that it stands by every single principle included in the document it submitted. However, in order to give a chance to that document, one cannot think or even pretend to think that there is a military option to this conflict. There is no military option. That option has been tried and has failed. The only option today is realism and compromise. The path that the people of Nagorno Karabakh have chosen over the past two decades is a path that has become irreversible. Solidifying and formalizing the process will greatly contribute to peace and stability in our region.

Karabakh is not a cause. It is an ancient place, a beautiful garden with people who have earned the right to live in peace and prosperity. That is what we seek, and we cannot accept anything less.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Morshed Khan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh.

Mr. Khan (Bangladesh): I extend my delegation's sincerest congratulations to the President on her very well-deserved election. I would like to congratulate her predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, on his stewardship of the historic sixtieth session of the

Assembly and to pay a special tribute to the Secretary-General for his dedicated service to the Organization over the past decade. It is also my pleasure to welcome Montenegro as the newest Member of our Organization.

The Assembly is meeting against a backdrop of dire human tragedy. The recent wanton Israeli aggression in Lebanon has shocked the world. Most disconcerting has been the fact that the international community failed to respond promptly and effectively, as colossal devastation wrecked Lebanon and the Lebanese people. In the end, the Security Council redeemed itself by ordering a ceasefire in Lebanon. Let us hope that the Security Council will exercise its mandated responsibilities so that such atrocities and violations of human rights do not occur in the future under any pretext.

Alongside Lebanon, the dire situation in Palestine has worsened owing to the continuous use of disproportionate force by the Israeli Government. We call upon the international community to make sincere efforts to put the peace process back on track.

The scourge of terrorism knows no boundaries. It is professed and carried out by a handful, and the vast majority of victims are innocent men, women and children. Efforts to combat terrorism and its protagonists globally and nationally may have seen some positive results. However, action to combat terror by individual countries has created divisions between peoples and affected interfaith harmony. Many individuals are being subjected to racial or religious profiling, which foments suspicion, misunderstanding and even hatred. That is what the terrorists are actually looking for: to divide the nations of the world. We must ensure that they do not have their way.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has unequivocally declared that Bangladesh abjures religious extremism and does not and will not support any kind of militancy. The Prime Minister has reasserted her Government's vow to eliminate all militants and their networks. She has called for the passage of tough laws to punish the perpetrators, whom she has repeatedly dubbed enemies of Islam, enemies of democracy, development, humanity and the people of the country — our country, beloved Bangladesh.

In this connection, I must mention that a small group of extremists carried out a country-wide bombing attack on 17 August last year in Bangladesh. But the extremists underestimated the will of the Government and the people of Bangladesh. Instead of fear, there was anger. The Government mobilized all available resources to relentlessly hunt down the leaders and the operatives. I am proud to inform the Assembly that we have been able to bring all the leaders of the outlawed militant group to justice.

Bangladesh today is what it has always been: a moderate, tolerant society that practises democracy and where the equal rights of each and every citizen are preserved. Our determined action did not allow the opportunists and the perpetrators of terror to destroy the values of democracy and tolerance that we treasure most.

For smaller States, the United Nations remains the premier world body, addressing the challenges they face. Despite its shortcomings, the United Nations has proved invaluable in times of crisis and in the tasks of preserving global peace and security and promoting sustainable development.

At present, we are seized of the issue of reform of the United Nations. Bangladesh holds that reform is a process and not an end in itself. We do not think that arbitrary deadlines or pressure in order to obtain a particular outcome are helpful. It is our belief that, for meaningful reform, an environment of mutual trust, confidence and respect for divergent positions is indispensable.

We trust that the new Human Rights Council will not be a mere replication of the Commission on Human Rights. It must not indulge in politicization of its work. Bangladesh, as an elected member, is committed to advancing the work of the Council in a fair and balanced manner.

We hope, too, that the newly constituted Peacebuilding Commission will fill the existing institutional gap in the United Nations system to facilitate the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding. Bangladesh, being one of the largest contributors to United Nations peacekeeping operations, will bring its experience to the work of the Commission in all its aspects.

As the United Nations deals with individual post-conflict situations, it must not lose sight of wider issues, such as disarmament and small-arms proliferation, as well as weapons of mass destruction.

Bangladesh would like to see sustained efforts by the United Nations in these very critical areas.

The Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit (resolution 60/1), which had development as its centrepiece, has hardly progressed beyond mere pledges. For the least developed countries (LDCs), the savings-investment gap and lack of capital remain the primary constraints to development. Official development assistance (ODA) to the LDCs in 2004, according to the most recent data available, amounted to $23.8 billion, or $35.70 per person living in these countries. This is certainly not sufficient to complement income or boost investment. Faster growth in exports, and the consequent rise in income, could help the LDCs accumulate the resources needed for development. For this, we would need unhindered market access for all LDC exports. The Doha development round must resume to ensure special and differential treatment for the LDCs. We would also need increased ODA, full debt cancellation, foreign direct investment and transfer of technology to enhance the global partnership for development.

We can also increase capital flows to LDCs by addressing one of the fundamental inequities in the global financial system. It is utterly inefficient and unfair that the LDCs cannot utilize their own foreign exchange reserves — a staggering $28 billion — to finance their own development efforts and that these reserves yield very low interest, or none at all. On the other hand, when LDCs borrow against their own reserves, they pay a huge premium in interest or service charges. The United Nations system must lead the international effort to reform the global reserve system and to make arrangements that enable the LDCs to borrow at a zero mark-up of the interest rate against their own foreign exchange reserves.

The General Assembly has just concluded the midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the LDCs. In this context, I would like to point out that, unless duty-free and quota-free market access for all LDC products is ensured, the agreed development goals and targets will remain unattained for a long time to come. We call on the developed countries to fulfil their pledges of support for the framework to facilitate aid for trade, to which they have committed many times over. An effective monitoring capacity under the auspices of the United Nations can significantly facilitate this task.

Let me now turn to two issues that are of particular concern to Bangladesh. I begin with migration. Liberalizing the movement of labour can generate significant benefits and a win-win result for both sending and receiving countries, as well as for the migrants themselves. Numerous studies have found that a modest commitment under the World Trade Organization's General Agreement on Trade in Services Mode 4 would offer substantial welfare gains for both developing and developed countries. It may even exceed the gain of complete market liberalization in merchandise trade.

The second issue is the threat of natural disasters, which often undermine our development efforts. The Asian tsunami was a wake-up call for all of us. In these times of increasing global interdependence, disaster risk management is a matter of global concern, as the impact of a disaster in one region adversely affects others. Bangladesh has advanced considerably in the field of comprehensive disaster management. We stand ready to share our experience, which has been internationally recognized as the best-practice model. The United Nations must gear its efforts to introduce weather insurance and weather derivatives to manage the risks of natural disasters, especially in developing countries.

Within weeks of her assumption to power five years ago with a massive mandate from our people, the Government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia launched a reform programme to restore discipline in our country. Thanks to our relentless efforts, we could accelerate the growth momentum remarkably without destabilizing our macroeconomic fundamentals.

After maintaining a growth rate of 6 per cent for the past five years, we expect a growth rate of 6.7 per cent this fiscal year, against the backdrop of a global economic slowdown. Given natural disasters, political unrest and many external shocks — such as the global economic recession, the phasing out of the Multifibre Arrangement and the oil price hike — that affect our economies, that is a remarkable achievement.

Keeping our commitment to the Millennium Declaration, we have already achieved two Millennium Development Goals by ensuring access to safe drinking water and removing gender disparity in primary and secondary education. Enrolment in primary education has been ensured for 97 per cent of our children. Of course, there is no complacency on our part and we

know that we should try to achieve 100 per cent enrolment in our primary schools.

Apart from those achievements, Bangladesh has achieved remarkable success in the reduction of child and maternal mortality and malnutrition and in improving food security. We have begun channelling resources to targeted programmes in the light of our Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. Our development efforts, however sincere, will not reach their goals or even see the light of day unless they are complemented by international support.

Bangladesh has been pursuing meaningful regional cooperation to improve the socio-economic conditions of South and South-East Asia. As the current Chair of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and as members of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, the Asia Cooperation Dialogue and the Developing Eight Countries, Bangladesh has demonstrated its commitment to working with other countries of the region. We are working in total harmony with the nations of our region. Our recent partnership in the Regional Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations bears testimony to our commitment.

The present Government will complete its tenure towards the end of next month and will hand over power to a neutral caretaker Government in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. We very much hope to return to work again with the General Assembly. We have had peaceful transfers of power over the past three elections under neutral caretaker Governments when the voters exercised their franchise freely and without fear or intimidation. The system has worked and has been accepted by the people. Democracy has taken firm root in our country and the next general election will be one more opportunity for the people to demonstrate that they are the ultimate source of power.

I end with the assurance that we will work together for a better tomorrow for future generations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Talbak Nazarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan.

Mr. Nazarov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): It gives me great pleasure to join in the warm congratulations to Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa upon her assumption of the office of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. We are confident that her extensive professional and life experience will be instrumental in addressing the issues faced by the General Assembly.

Tajikistan also welcomes the accession of Montenegro to the United Nations. On this occasion, on behalf of the Government of our country, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to the Government and people of that friendly State.

A year has passed since the historic Summit confirmed the common views of the international community on the key issues of our time and on the United Nations as the universal international Organization whose goals and objectives are focused on the collective search for answers to the questions of concern to the entire international community. The leaders of our States declared that only strict compliance with the United Nations Charter, a comprehensive collective approach and mutual trust can ensure international security and development. The latest developments in the Middle East have proved once again the need to enhance the coordinating role of the United Nations in addressing global and regional issues.

Tajikistan is in favour of further strengthening the United Nations and lends its overall support to the process of its ongoing reform. As for Security Council reform, it should be undertaken by consensus, with due consideration for the interests of all Member States.

We believe that it was broad consensus that made possible such major accomplishments as the holding of the first session of the Human Rights Council, the launching of the Democracy Fund and the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund. Of special importance was the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, whose objective is also to sustain peace and development in post-conflict countries.

The Government of Tajikistan was among those that actively advocated the establishment of an efficient United Nations body of that kind — one that would focus on issues of coordination and targeted support for countries emerging from armed conflict. Tajikistan's painful but ultimately successful transition from civil war to peace convincingly demonstrated the need for an international peacebuilding agency to assist the Security Council and other United Nations bodies

in their efforts to accelerate the rehabilitation of countries emerging from crisis and to create guarantees for the non-recurrence of such conflicts.

Stable peace prevails in Tajikistan today, and national accord and respect for political pluralism have been achieved. The complex process of establishing democracy is under way, and all political forces involved are aware of their ever-increasing responsibility for the fate of our country. In compliance with the Constitution and valid legal procedures, new effective Government institutions are being successfully built. Respect for the law is increasingly the rule rather than the exception. Civil society is developing at an accelerated pace. Citizens determine their own destiny through active participation in the life of the State. The forthcoming presidential elections, scheduled for November 2006, will be an important milestone on the road towards peace and will open a new page in the history of the establishment of Tajik statehood.

In Tajikistan, as in the majority of United Nations Member States, the issue of sustainable development ranks among our top priorities. Today, we are fully aware of how instrumental the United Nations agenda has been in enhancing sustainable development and eradicating poverty, epidemics, famine and illiteracy the world over. At the same time, the implementation of a large-scale programme to achieve the Millennium Development Goals will require not only extra effort, but also considerable financing. In that regard, we expect tangible results from the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development.

In that connection, we highly value the outcome of the United Nations High-level Dialogue recently held in New York, which helped States concerned with issues of migration to reach constructive mutual understanding. Migration has been an issue of vital importance to our country since the outbreak of the civil war, when a part of the Tajik population had to leave the country. I would like to emphasize the special role and capacity of the United Nations in strengthening international cooperation in the field of migration and development. In this regard, Tajikistan is resolved to achieve as much progress as possible in implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In recent years, tangible progress has been achieved in the implementation of a number of goals, and the foundation has been laid for enhancing efforts in this area.

But long-term stability in Central Asia in the years to come is inseparable from the development of regional integration.

Currently, vast opportunities are emerging in the Central Asian region for the implementation of large-scale economic projects, the creation of a unified market of commodities and services and the establishment of conditions for attracting capital investment. Potential foreign investors see Central Asia as a single entity; and, primarily, as a common market.

Economic integration will become a powerful factor in the sustainable development of the region and will bring about the reduction of poverty and the improvement of well-being. For this reason, Tajikistan will continue to stand for strengthening of ties and the expansion of mutually advantageous cooperation among the States of the region.

The current positive processes in Afghanistan also create favourable conditions for regional cooperation in implementing transportation and communication projects which will provide the region with access to the southern seaports. The creation of new multi-modal transport corridors and the revival of the Great Silk Road routes will form a unified interconnected system of communications and make it possible for Central Asian States to gain access to promising markets.

It is also obvious that in many respects the attainment of the MDGs depends on assistance rendered by the international community to developing countries. Tajikistan joins the request addressed to the donor community to at least double the amount of assistance provided for the purposes of long-term development. The process of exchanging the debts of developing countries for national projects in the field of sustainable development remains an urgent issue.

One of our planet's major assets is the fresh water indispensable for sustaining life. Our common goal in this respect is to develop qualitatively new patterns for the sustainable management of water resources and for addressing water-related economic issues at the national, regional and international levels. This can be achieved through a combination of appropriate support from the international community and national efforts,

with the leading role being played by countries and regions faced with the water-resource problems.

In this regard, Tajikistan hopes for the continued active involvement of the Member States in the activities of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", 2005-2015, including the successful holding of the International Freshwater Forum in Dushanbe in 2010. In order to coordinate activities in this area the Government of Tajikistan is establishing the National Water Committee. It will monitor progress and develop effective ways of attaining the goals of the water Decade at the national, regional and global levels through cooperation with the countries and international organizations concerned. Our efforts in the area of water are part and parcel of the strategic programme for the attainment of the MDGs.

It is well known that international terrorism, transnational organized crime and illegal drug trafficking obstruct sustainable development. Tajikistan believes that the United Nations and its Security Council provide a unique opportunity for the development and implementation of joint measures to confront international terrorism and the narcotics threat. We entirely support the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Uniting against terrorism: recommendations for a global counter-terrorism strategy", and we view the outlined principles for confronting new challenges and risks as major instruments for counteracting those threats.

The response of the international community to the complex strategic threat of terrorism must also be comprehensive. The community of nations must intensify its efforts to counteract the instigation of acts of terror, the spread of terrorism ideology, extremism and separatism, religious and ethnic intolerance and hostility, and the financing of terrorism.

Universalizing and improving an international legal framework to counter terrorism remains an urgent issue. The speedy approval of the draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism will serve the interests of all countries and peoples in the United Nations community. Tajikistan will continue to support the strengthening of the United Nations as the core institution in this area.

The global system for counteracting terrorism currently being shaped cannot be established without the involvement of regional and subregional organizations. This should be taken into account when adopting measures aimed at combating any manifestations of extremism and violence at the regional and global levels. We regard participation of regional structures in this process as one of the major prerequisites for ensuring collective security. Among the structures of this nature in our region are the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

We believe that long-term success in combating terrorism and religious extremism depends on the elimination of the deep-rooted causes of these negative phenomena, generated by social and economic problems in the society. Prevention of illegal drug trafficking, which, to a certain extent, serves as a breeding ground for terrorism and international crime, must become part and parcel of our common struggle against terrorism. In this regard I would like to reiterate that Tajikistan is prepared to continue a constructive dialogue and cooperation with the aim of establishing an efficient global partnership to counteract the narcotics threat.

It must be said that current efforts at counteracting the narcotics threat are not sufficiently effective. For this reason, we believe that financial and technical assistance to Afghanistan, to be rendered within targeted programmes, and the creation of a modern, efficient and capable Afghan border service to safeguard the external borders, including the Afghan-Tajik border, would be a worthy application of the efforts of the international community in this area. Also, within the anti-narcotics partnership, we suggest enhanced interaction with the Afghan structures with the purpose of adopting joint measures to prevent drug trafficking across the Afghan-Tajik border. We are convinced that these measures could serve as a basis for the proposed establishment of the first section of the security belt around Afghanistan. Involvement in the constructive process of Afghanistan's neighbours and factoring in the regional aspects of the post-conflict rehabilitation of that country may well be key to the success of the efforts undertaken by the international community.

Today, the regional dimension becomes one of the key factors of long-term development. Broad and constructive regional economic cooperation in Central Asia, which possesses considerable natural resources, is of particular importance at the present juncture. We believe that achieving that goal could enable Central

Asia to become self-sufficient in terms of energy, fuel and food supply and a dynamic, developing region of the world. Therefore, we believe that the achievement of the MDGs should hold a place in the new structure of global security currently being shaped, and become one of the tools for addressing new challenges and threats. Today, as never before, it is becoming increasingly obvious that a security policy needs to be integrated into development.

The scale of the challenges facing the international community dictates the need to further strengthen our Organization. There is no doubt that we must do everything we can to make the United Nations more effective in dealing with issues of international security. The collective approach should keep us from making hasty and emotional decisions, since we are dealing with the Organization responsible for collective security, sustainable development and protection of human rights. It is with the United Nations, despite some of its imperfections, that humanity places its hope for a peaceful and just world order, for tangible achievements in the fields of combating poverty and natural disasters. A responsible attitude towards the United Nations is in the interests of each and every Member State.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Norov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Norov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): While acknowledging the unique and irreplaceable role played by the United Nations in international affairs, one still has to recognize the need to reform this institution according to present-day realities. Let me briefly dwell upon our vision of these reforms.

It is necessary to significantly increase the efficiency of the United Nations management, which must set itself realistic and feasible objectives and rapidly respond to challenges and threats. The reform of the Organization must reflect the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in internal affairs and strengthen the equal cooperation between States. It must be based upon the principles of broad international consensus.

The General Assembly needs to concentrate on designing constructive ways of addressing the problems of regional and global security, which affect the interests of the majority of the Member States. Much attention should be given to questions of post-conflict rehabilitation and combating terrorism. The United Nations should assume a coordinating role in these spheres using the support of all Member States. Such an approach will contribute to strengthening the Organization's ability to meet contemporary challenges.

Security Council reform must ensure the fair geographical and regional representation of both developed and developing States whose authority has been acknowledged by the international community and who play an important role in addressing the main tasks facing the Organization today.

The international community is about to make a decision on an important issue — the election of the new Secretary-General. Considering the principle of rotation and the increasing political weight and economic significance of the Asian countries, the Republic of Uzbekistan fully supports the view that a representative from the Asian group should assume that post. We support the candidature of the Minister forForeign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The international community places its hopes on the newly established Human Rights Council, which is called upon to improve the work of the United Nations in the field of human rights. It is important not to allow the Council to be used as a tool for promoting the interests of certain countries to the detriment of others. Only by stopping the practice of double standards, politicization and confrontation can we turn that body into the forum for equal and open dialogue, enjoying the trust of all Member States. The work of that United Nations body must be guided by objective and unbiased assessment of human rights issues. It must assist in elaborating constructive solutions to all problems that arise, instead of being used for political purposes.

The fundamental changes in today's world are accompanied by the emergence of new challenges and threats. At present, terrorism, extremism and drug aggression pose a great danger to the sustainable development of States and peoples of the world.

The principal approaches of the Republic of Uzbekistan towards addressing these and other problems of security include the following points.

Uzbekistan firmly supports the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (*resolution 60/288*),

adopted by the General Assembly on 8 September 2006. Terrorism is not acceptable in any of its forms and manifestations. The fight against terrorism can be effective and efficient only by eliminating its causes, the first of which is the ideological and extremist centres that finance and direct the forces of international terrorism. We must also design common approaches to assessing this, the most dangerous phenomenon of today's world.

A universal convention on international terrorism could become an effective basis for joint counteraction against the threat of terrorism. This instrument must be of a non-discriminatory nature, exclude the policy of double standards and call upon States for concerted action in countering the ideologies of extremism.

Maintenance of regional and global security is not possible without establishing comprehensive peace and stability in Afghanistan. One way to resolve the Afghan problem and restore a peaceful and neutral Afghanistan is effective and real progress in implementing concrete projects, funded by the international community, in the social, economic and humanitarian spheres — those spheres that can affect attitudes among the long-suffering people of Afghanistan.

A fundamental strategy review and more efficient coordination are required in combating one of the most dangerous problems: drug production and drug trafficking.

Uzbekistan, as an initiator of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region, together with its neighbours, is doing everything possible to strengthen the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. On 8 September 2006 in Semipalatinsk, the Central Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treat was signed. That initiative, put forward by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, is a concrete contribution of the States in the region to strengthening the global non-proliferation process and also to creating a solid system of regional security. Uzbekistan calls upon nuclear powers to accede to the protocol on security guarantees annexed to the Central Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty as soon as possible. I wish to take this opportunity to express gratitude to the United Nations for its assistance in realizing this initiative.

Mr. Sow (Guinea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In closing, I express my sincere hope that the results of the work of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session will contribute to the successful realization of the joint efforts of the Member States in the struggle against threats and challenges to global security and to furthering the peaceful development of peoples.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Fiorenzo Stolfi, Minister for Foreign and Political Affairs and Economic Planning of the Republic of San Marino.

Mr. Stolfi (San Marino) (*spoke in Italian: English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of San Marino, I wish to congratulate Her Excellency Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I am confident that her abilities and expertise will be key to the success of this session. Along with my satisfaction on the election to such a high position of a woman after so many years, I add my best wishes.

I also wish to thank the outgoing President, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his valuable work and total commitment and resolve in implementing the reform programme started by the Secretary-General.

The Republic of San Marino firmly believes that the role of the United Nations needs strengthening in order to enable the Organization to operate as efficiently as possible and with optimal coordination among its bodies. With special reference to the General Assembly, the most important decision-making body of the United Nations, San Marino believes that it should focus more closely on the actual implementation of its resolutions and create mechanisms to make its decisions more binding.

For the small and medium-sized countries that represent the majority of the Member States, the revitalization of the General Assembly — the main and sometimes only forum in which they can make their voice heard — is essential. Indeed, the General Assembly is the organ that fully implements the principles of democracy and equal representation upon which this Organization is founded.

There is no doubt that Security Council reform is the other major objective of the United Nations. San Marino believes that it is necessary to resume dialogue. In our opinion, the new Security Council should be

founded upon a flexible base so that it can adjust appropriately to future changes. The enlargement and democratization of the Council can only improve peace processes and thereby the defence of the weakest Member States.

San Marino also expresses its deep satisfaction with the new Human Rights Council, which is already fully operational. We hope that there will be a clear division of tasks between the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly in order to avoid duplication and ensure complementarity and efficiency in a balanced relationship and mutual independence.

San Marino followed with great interest the intense negotiations leading to the adoption on 30 June of the resolution on the follow-up to the 2005 World Summit, including the Millennium Development Goals, and fully endorses the call of the President of the Assembly to focus attention at this general debate on setting up a global partnership for development. That goal is a fundamental step towards the eradication of poverty and the achievement of the other Millennium Goals. To do so, however, cooperation at all levels is essential and San Marino is ready to make its own concrete contribution.

The development goals are also the key points of the programme that San Marino will present when it assumes the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in mid-November. During its chairmanship, which is extremely important to the Republic, San Marino will also address other global issues, such as intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

The Republic of San Marino, in line with its centuries-old history of peace, democracy and freedom, is particularly sensitive to the need, in today's international context characterized by growing tensions and violent contrasts, to promote dialogue among cultures and religions based on respect for diversity and universally recognized human rights.

In that regard, I wish to reiterate the determination of the Government and institutions of San Marino to guarantee all possible support to the international community for the achievement of those objectives. It is in that spirit that my country has consistently demonstrated its solidarity with the most disadvantaged people and circumstances and has acceded to legal instruments particularly important to the promotion and achievement of international cooperation in the search for dialogue and the affirmation of the principles of tolerance and understanding. Thus, intercultural and interreligious dialogue constitutes the basis of any peace process and the most powerful tool to reject all forms of extremism, which unfortunately, as we know, often turns into terrorism.

During our chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, to begin in November, I will seek to organize a meeting with the Assembly on that important subject.

In that context, we cannot but think of the Middle East, in particular the situation in Lebanon, where the United Nations is committed to a new difficult peace mission, which we sincerely hope will have a successful outcome. Only a year ago, San Marino expressed from this rostrum its confidence and hope in the peace process and in the good will of the parties involved in the protracted conflict. After a series of violent attacks, mostly against civilians and innocent people, as always, the only achievement so far has been an unstable ceasefire. To help alleviate that suffering, San Marino has decided, in line with its centuries-old tradition of solidarity, to offer a special contribution for humanitarian aid in Lebanon.

San Marino has welcomed with great satisfaction the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission as the ideal institutional response to post-conflict situations. The history of my country is deeply rooted in the values of peaceful coexistence among all peoples, and the newly elected Government has decided to include in its programme, for the first time, a specific mandate for peace. The objective is to promote, also in collaboration with volunteer associations and by supporting international cooperation, any useful initiative to affirm and safeguard that important objective.

Therefore, the institutions of San Marino, in response to the United Nations appeal, decided to celebrate the International Day of Peace on 21 September. That occasion was also marked by the opening of a public subscription to raise funds for the victims of conflicts to be devolved to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

My country will guarantee its active support for the Pan-European Campaign on Violence against Women, in particular domestic violence, which will be launched during San Marino's chairmanship of the

Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, in parallel with the celebration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Moreover, it will strongly support the development of the Council of Europe programme "Building a Europe for and with Children".

Another particularly important occasion will be the participation of San Marino in the United Nations Global Youth Leadership Summit, which will examine the contribution of young people to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, with particular reference to sport, development and peace, and will provide the youth organizations with the necessary guidelines for future action.

San Marino greatly appreciates the successful outcome of the work of the group established to draft an international convention on the protection of persons with disabilities. Indeed, my country is becoming increasingly aware of and attentive to the problems and rights of disabled people. In this regard, only two weeks ago, the San Marino Parliament approved an agenda inviting the Government to sign and ratify the Convention as soon as possible and to take measures in support of the principles contained therein.

Let me underscore how, despite all the difficulties and divisions, the United Nations still demonstrates its ability to put in place all initiatives and activities which are at the core of its very existence. It is, therefore, a duty for all States to keep alive the flame of ideals and the determination that constitute the foundations of the Organization's identity and, at the same time, the crucial point of reference for all of our actions, both at the national level and also in terms of international cooperation.

Prompted by this conviction, and strongly committed to guaranteeing a constant and constructive contribution, we would like to express our best wishes to the President, to the Secretary-General — to whom we reiterate our most sincere appreciation and highest esteem for his dedicated commitment during these years at the helm of the United Nations — and to all colleagues and representatives who share the same conviction.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Saleh Said Meky, Minister of Health of Eritrea.

Mr. Meky (Eritrea): On behalf of the Government and people of the State of Eritrea, I avail myself of this opportunity to extend to Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, and to the Government and people of the Kingdom of Bahrain, my sincere congratulations on her election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I also wish to express our appreciation to Mr. Jan Eliasson of Sweden, who presided over the sixtieth session of the Assembly, for his dedication and skilful leadership during the past year.

For reasons of brevity, I do not wish to dwell on generic themes of global economic development, United Nations reforms and other issues of interest that have been addressed comprehensively by many speakers with whom we share similar views. I shall instead focus on cardinal issues of peace and security that remain of paramount importance to my country and the Horn of Africa region as a whole.

In this respect, allow me, Sir, to bring to the attention of this Assembly, for the umpteenth time, Ethiopia's reckless flouting of international law that is threatening peace and security in our region. It is painful for my Government to harp on the same theme at every Assembly session for the past four years. But these are the sad facts of a perilous reality imposed on my country. In the event, we are duty bound to press for and exhaust all legal processes to stave off dangerous consequences before it is too late.

As the Assembly is aware, demarcation of the boundary between Eritrea and Ethiopia remains stalled, more than four years after the legal award, owing to Ethiopia's rejection of the final and binding arbitration decision. Ethiopia's conduct is contrary to the terms and conditions of the Algiers Peace Agreement. Indeed, article 4.15 of the Agreement stipulates as follows:

> "The parties agree that the delimitation and demarcation determinations of the Commission shall be final and binding. Each Party shall respect the border so determined, as well as the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the other party".

It must be stressed that there is no equivocation or ambiguity in the general provisions of this Agreement. Yet, Ethiopia has violated the core of the Algiers Peace Agreement with impunity. And, it has continued to occupy, by force, the sovereign territory of a United Nations Member State for the past four

years, in violation of that Agreement and Article 2, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Charter.

How and why did this happen?

To single out Ethiopia as the primary and only culprit would be missing the forest for the woods. The fact is that Ethiopia has neither the power nor the political skill to defy international law for even a single day, let alone for four long years. If it has done so for the past four years, it is simply because its unlawful conduct has been, and continues to be, encouraged and supported by certain Powers in the Security Council.

This poignant state of affairs is best exemplified by the following three instances. First, when three years ago, in September 2003, Ethiopia's Prime Minister sent an ominous letter to the Security Council announcing his Government's blatant rejection of the Boundary Commission decision and calling for a "new mechanism" outside the Commission to overrule the legal award, the Secretary-General and the Council chose to accommodate Ethiopia's unlawful conduct. This happened in spite of the fact that the Council is the main guarantor of the Algiers Peace Agreement and has treaty obligations to maintain the integrity of the legal decision. It must be recalled that the Council is explicitly empowered, by article 14 of the same agreement, to invoke Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter to ensure compliance by the parties.

As it happened, the Secretary-General and the Council opted for the wrong path and appointed a Special Envoy, in contravention of the legal agreement. The demarcation process has thus been stymied for the past four years at huge financial cost to the international community and inestimable cost in terms of lost opportunity and heightened tension for the peoples of Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Secondly, when this Special Envoy scheme proved unworkable, the United States Government employed its full diplomatic clout to unlawfully alter and modify the legal Award under the rubric of a "new initiative". This time around, the United States dropped all pretensions of influencing the demarcation process from without, through an external envoy wearing a United Nations mantle. The current plan consists of directly planting a senior expert as an adjunct to the Boundary Commission and bestowing on him wide powers to alter the decision in the process of demarcation.

Washington's package further envisages creating a new and political appellate body — outside the Boundary Commission — to accommodate Ethiopia's additional requests in case of dissatisfaction with the "alterations" that would be implemented through the services of the expert. This United States "diplomatic" scheme, which in effect renders fundamental tenets of the Algiers Peace Agreement null and void, has been tailored to fully address Ethiopia's request for an extrajudicial mechanism when it rejected the Boundary Commission decision in September 2003.

From the foregoing, one can only surmise that Ethiopia's original rejection of the award must have been tacitly supported by Washington from the outset. The United States Government has even resorted to a series of measures against my Government with the apparent purpose of furthering this aim. In this connection, I wish to refer particularly to the seizure of financial and other assets of our Embassy in Washington by the United States Homeland Security Department in contravention of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and to avail myself of this occasion to lodge a complaint on behalf of my Government and to solicit the support of the international community for redress and restitution.

Thirdly, the semi-annual and other periodic reports of the Secretariat to the Security Council have invariably tended to downplay Ethiopia's violation of the Algiers Peace Agreement and the Charter of the United Nations. These reports have often tended to apportion equal blame to both parties without differentiation and, particularly in the last two years, to impugn Eritrea alone. In this regard, Security Council resolution 1640 (2005), which the Security Council adopted in December last year, went so far as to threaten imposing punitive measures against Eritrea, ostensibly for curbing the freedom of movement of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), while overlooking Ethiopia's refusal to accept unconditionally the final and binding decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC).

This unlawful conduct by Ethiopia is indeed threatening to unravel the peace process as a whole. We can also cite various instances in which the United Nations Secretariat went out of its way to downplay unacceptable excesses and infringements of Eritrea's sovereignty by UNMEE staff and to blame my Government instead of taking appropriate remedial measures. Incidentally, whether the huge annual

financial outlays for the sustenance of UNMEE are really justified and provide value for money spent remains a critical matter that requires thorough scrutiny and auditing.

For us, these concerted unwarranted acts belie an overarching theme. The solemn pledges that we have heard on this podium from leaders of major Powers on upholding international justice and the rule of law, like the collective commitments to prevent and resolve conflicts and avoid humanitarian disasters, ring hollow at the altar of reality. When the chips are down, major Powers, and especially the United States, continue to pursue their perceived narrow interests at the expense of regional peace and security and the sovereign rights of nations and peoples.

Be this as it may, my Government is determined not to allow the legal process to be derailed through various subtle subterfuges. Let me recall that Eritrea's right of independence was compromised by the United Nations in the 1950s — during the period of African decolonization — to serve the interests of the United States. Half a century later, we shall not allow any encroachment of our territorial integrity.

In addition, as my Government underlined during the last meeting of the Boundary Commission, first, the award that is "final and binding" in accordance with the Algiers Peace Agreement should not be tampered with under any circumstances. In this connection, Ethiopia's acceptance of the decision must be ascertained publicly and unequivocally. Secondly, the details and modalities of demarcation must be worked out in an environment that is free from political interference, unlawful and compounding mechanisms, and loopholes susceptible to distortion.

Allow me now to briefly dwell on the dangerous developments that are unfolding in Somalia and the muddled interpretations, both deliberate and innocent, that have gained currency in recent months. We must recognize that the current crisis in Somalia derives from multifaceted and cumulative underlying causes that have been in place for the past 15 years. Collective or individual initiatives that will be taken to promote enduring peace and stability in Somalia must accordingly address the following parameters if they are to bear fruit.

First, the daunting problem in Somalia is essentially an internal political problem that must be resolved through negotiations among Somali political forces themselves. In this spirit, my Government welcomes the efforts of the Sudanese Government to facilitate talks among Somali political forces.

Secondly, the portrayal of recent developments in Somalia in terms of the global war on terrorism is factually untenable and politically imprudent. The overarching national cause of the Somali people should not be reduced to or lumped together with this singular concern.

Thirdly, any external military intervention will further polarize the political realities of Somalia and induce greater conflagration. Ethiopia's military intervention, under whatever guise or justification, is particularly dangerous both for reasons of historical animosity and because of the events of the past few years. It must be understood that there is no consensus within the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) on the modalities, timing and nature of deploying foreign forces, although the matter was comprehensively discussed at ministerial meetings for the purposes of contingency planning only. We find the African Union's recent call for deployment of an 8,000-strong peacekeeping force in the absence of a robust framework of peace unwise and fraught with unnecessary complications. Its practicality is also questionable in view of the financial and other challenges that the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) is grappling with in that country.

Fourthly, a recent call by some forces for a selective lifting of the United Nations embargo on arms is unbalanced, misguided and fraught with the potential for dangerous consequences. Indeed, a selective lifting can only imperil the political process of reconciliation in Somalia and a durable political settlement there. Accordingly, appropriate adjustments to the arms embargo in Somalia can be contemplated only when there is irreversible progress in the political arrangements giving rise to national institutions that have credible legitimacy and popular support.

Fifthly, the challenges for promoting lasting peace and stability in Somalia are formidable. They will be complicated if different actors work, or are seen to be working, at cross purposes. Closer coordination and consultation among all interested players must be cultivated and structured.

Finally, the current situation in Somalia is raising the spectre of territorial claims and disputes between Somalia and its neighbours. Territorial disputes and

claims can only be settled by strict adherence to the sanctity of colonial boundaries.

Let me conclude by urging caution and prudence in the international efforts to help resolve the problems in the Sudan. The truth is that the high price of hasty and ill-advised policies will ultimately be borne by the people of the Sudan and the region as a whole. The complexities of the situation must therefore be gauged carefully, and all international efforts must be harnessed to promote a robust peace package that will bring about a lasting solution. Focus on short-term arrangements without an overall peace framework will only postpone and complicate a lasting solution.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Elmar Maharram oglu Mammadyarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Mammadyarov (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election to the presidency of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly and wish her every success during her tenure.

I would like also to extend my sincere thanks to her predecessor, my good friend Mr. Jan Eliasson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, for his efforts and active work with the delegations throughout the last session.

The 2005 High-level Plenary Meeting of the Assembly became an important milestone in the history of the United Nations. It reaffirmed our faith in the Organization and our unwavering interest to make it stronger and effective. I am pleased to emphasize the positive moves that we have made since last September on issues such as development, the environment, HIV/AIDS, Secretariat reform, establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund and the Peacebuilding Fund.

The founding of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council are remarkable moments in the history of the United Nations. Yet more remains to be done to realize our common vision of solidarity and collective security, which is premised on the shared values and principles of the Charter.

As we move towards such ambitious goals, it is increasingly apparent that multilateralism with a strong United Nations at its core remains the only reliable instrument for maintaining international peace and security, achieving sustainable development and promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Strengthening the deliberative and decision-making authority of the General Assembly, which represents the views of all Member States, is key to the successful implementation and effectiveness of the reforms.

Azerbaijan believes that reform of the Security Council should not be confined to enlargement of its membership. We stand for the rationalization of the Council's working methods, greater transparency in decision-making, accountability in performance and full implementation of its resolutions.

The election of the new Secretary-General is an event of the utmost importance for the Organization. It has already been revealed to suffer from a number of deficiencies and requires greater transparency and inclusion of the wider membership. Azerbaijan believes that the new head of the United Nations should clearly recognize the trends and challenges faced by the international community at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Azerbaijan regrets that the late response of the Security Council to the evolving crisis in the Middle East allowed the humanitarian tragedy to unfold. In that regard, implementation of the measures contained in Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), including those related to the Lebanese Government's seven-point peace plan, is very important for bringing durable peace to the Middle East. Azerbaijan will continue its efforts to contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflict and alleviate the sufferings of civilians in Lebanon.

I would like to express profound support for the States that have fallen victim to terrorist attacks. While strongly condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reaffirming our commitment to jointly fight that global scourge, we register our serious concern over attempts to link terrorism to the Islamic religion, culture or people.

There is a dire need to stop and reverse a growing tendency towards Islamophobia in the world. Azerbaijan, in its capacity as Chairman of the Ministerial Council of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) calls upon Member States to undertake concrete measures to enhance dialogue and

broaden understanding among nations, cultures and religions by promoting tolerance and respect for freedom of religion and belief. It is of vital importance to raise public awareness about the tenets and values of Islam worldwide, including in the Muslim societies. To that end, we plan to host in Baku in 2007, under the aegis of the OIC, an international conference on the role of the mass media in developing tolerance and mutual understanding.

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan has recently become a subject of urgent consideration by the General Assembly, due to the massive fires occurring in those territories. The Assembly adopted without a vote a resolution stressing the necessity to conduct an urgent environmental operation with a view to suppressing the fires, overcoming their detrimental impact and rehabilitating the affected territories. The resolution has a two-fold purpose. On the one hand, it envisages a number of practical steps, including an assessment of the short- and long-term impact of the fires on the environment as a step in preparation for the environmental operation, counteracting the environmental degradation of the region, and the rehabilitation of the fire-affected part of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. On the other, it serves as an unprecedented example of engaging the parties to the conflict, particularly Armenia and Azerbaijan, in a joint environmental operation to be carried out directly in the fire-affected zone. The implementation of the resolution will contribute to establishing an atmosphere of trust and confidence and will give positive impetus to the negotiation process.

Sadly, that is the only positive development so far and cannot be attributed to the overall situation concerning the settlement process. Although no substantial progress has been registered so far, the parties and mediators have accepted the stage-by-stage approach in the settlement process as the only possible option. Basically, there are two main issues on which the parties disagree — the definition of the status of self-rule for the population of the occupied Nagorny Karabakh region and the withdrawal of Armenian forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

There is a common understanding that the status cannot be defined today. It should be elaborated through a peaceful, democratic and legal process with the direct participation and consent of both Azerbaijani and Armenian communities of the Nagorny Karabakh region. To that end, the Armenian occupying forces have to withdraw from the occupied territories and the necessary conditions have to be in place to allow the secure and dignified return of the indigenous Azerbaijani displaced persons to the Nagorny Karabakh region and the surrounding territories of Azerbaijan.

Such a logical chain of events will establish the necessary conditions for the next stage of the settlement, which is normalizing life in the conflict-affected area, restoring intercommunal relations, launching socio-economic development and considering appropriate models of self-rule for the entire population of the region within Azerbaijan.

Our position is based on relevant resolutions of the Security Council and decisions of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which unequivocally demand the unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the restoration of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, the creation of favourable conditions for the safe return of the civilian population, the restoration of intercommunal relations, and the elaboration of the status of self-government within a democratic and legal process, based on the agreement of both communities of the region.

It is difficult to hope for a breakthrough in the negotiations when Armenia rejects face-to-face meetings and refuses to take a constructive approach to solving existing problems. What is more worrisome is that Armenia is attempting to support by all available means the separatist regime established under its control in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and to spread myths and legends about the historical past and the alleged democratic and economic achievements of the regime. As a matter of fact, the reality on the ground proves the opposite. The Armenian community, which is the only remaining part of the entire population of the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, is increasingly inclined to leave the unrecognized quasi-entity due to worsening living conditions and the lack of any prospect of economic and social development.

The dynamics of development of the entire region are strikingly evident, and in five or 10 years the economic growth of the region vis-à-vis Armenia will be much more impressive. It could be given a chance to join ongoing regional and transnational projects, but

prior to that Yerevan has to take a number of steps to establish normal relations with its neighbours.

The first plenary meetings of the Assembly under the presidency of Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa were marked by an extremely difficult debate over an issue that was procedural in nature, but had a substantial political bearing. I join my colleagues from the States members of the Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (GUAM) in commending her wisdom and efforts aimed at ensuring that the rules of this house serve the interests of all Member States. Procedural disadvantages should not constrain the Member States from bringing critical issues affecting their security to the attention of the Assembly.

The GUAM heads of State, in their Joint Declaration on the issue of conflict settlement, called upon States and international organizations to further facilitate, within their competence, conflict settlement processes in the GUAM area. Therefore, the inclusion of the new item on conflicts in the GUAM area in the agenda of the General Assembly is an attempt to raise the awareness of the Assembly of dangerous developments emerging from those unresolved conflicts.

The pledges we have made to promote better standards of living in larger freedom nourish the faith of people around the world in future positive change and development. Hence, there is no greater imperative than to fulfil the development agenda and to strengthen global partnership for development.

Azerbaijan is convinced that national development strategies should be a principal framework of development cooperation and support. Efficiency in the implementation process cannot be achieved unless it employs measures targeted at increasing the self-sufficiency of countries in the long run, inter alia, through knowledge, capacity-building, infrastructure development and market access and, ultimately, by reducing their dependence on foreign aid. A favourable global economic situation remains a prerequisite for the success of national development strategies, macroeconomic policies and, eventually, the economic and financial stability and growth of countries.

Azerbaijan believes that international organizations should support the efforts of countries to improve and sustain their economic performance. We look forward to the contribution of the United Nations with a stronger and more effective Economic and Social Council capable of effectively discharging its newly assigned functions.

Let me now describe the economic outlook for Azerbaijan and its experience in enhancing growth, development and social well-being. In the light of trends in 2005, gross domestic product is expected to increase by 30.5 per cent in 2006, driven by oil and gas production and exports. In 2006, State spending has been increased by up to 65 per cent, a large proportion being spent on the public sector and infrastructure. The key challenge facing the Government is to create a favourable environment for investment in the non-oil sector and to diversify exports. To achieve this objective, it must keep domestic reforms on track and strive to strengthen the business environment.

The year 2006 marked a historic moment for the region and beyond, with the official inauguration of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline. We are looking forward to completion of the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzerum natural gas pipeline this fall and remain committed to contributing to global energy security. At the same time, we are actively developing transregional infrastructure projects, in particular the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railroad, which has been recognized as an important addition to the East-West and North-South transportation corridors.

Last but not least, the establishment of the Human Rights Council marked a critical step towards enhancing the universal system for promoting and protecting human rights worldwide. The Council has been endowed with the necessary mandate to give human rights the central role foreseen by the Charter, and its status is that of a subsidiary body of the General Assembly. We have to build effective mechanisms, such as universal periodic review, special procedures and a complaints procedure within the Council. As a newly elected member of the Human Rights Council, Azerbaijan reiterates its readiness to cooperate with other Member States in order to ensure that the new Council becomes an effective body guided by the principles of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity and that it bases its activity on constructive and transparent dialogue and cooperation.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdurrahman Mohamed Shalghem, Secretary of the General People's

Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Mr. Shalghem (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation has already congratulated the President on her assumption of her high office. I would like to reaffirm our confidence in her ability to accomplish her task and to lead our deliberations to a successful conclusion. I also wish to express our gratitude to her predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, Foreign Minister of Sweden, for his conduct of the work of the General Assembly during the previous session. Lastly, we are indebted to the Secretary-General for his efforts to advance the process of reform at the United Nations and fulfilment of the purposes and principles of its Charter.

Last year our efforts were focused on reform. Some progress has now been made, and we have established the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. However, there is still a long way to go, since any reform that does not include the Security Council and enhance the role of the General Assembly will be of little value and will not meet the expectations of our peoples.

Unfortunately, our quest for reform of the Security Council has met with further encroachment by the Council on the functions and powers with which the General Assembly was endowed by the Charter. It is therefore incumbent on the Assembly to take immediate action to prevent the Council from infringing further on its authority.

We also take this opportunity to call on the permanent members of the Security Council not to hamper the reform efforts but rather to promote a genuine reform of the Organization. Such reform should place the power of decision-making in the hands of all members of the Assembly, a forum in which all States are entitled to vote. The Security Council will then become an executive tool for implementing the decisions of the Assembly. We can thus remedy the current situation in which the Council has become a domineering and inequitable body, applying double standards, lacking democracy and open to abuse of the veto.

History bears witness to the fact that the Council has never achieved peace and security in the world. On the contrary, it has served as a tool for aggression and wars and for the curtailment of peace mechanisms. Consequently, it is the General Assembly, in which all the peoples of the world are represented, that should take decisions on peace and war, and the power to apply Chapter VII of the Charter should be vested solely in the Assembly. The Security Council, with its limited membership, cannot be entrusted with such momentous decisions.

If we fail to agree on such a change, we must find a new formula for granting permanent membership of the Council. Permanent membership should be conferred on geographical groups rather than specific countries. We therefore demand that the African Union become a permanent member of the Security Council, as Africa is the only continent without a permanent seat on the Council.

More than three decades ago, Libya called for abolition of the veto. It submitted draft resolutions on this subject at the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly and the six following sessions. Libya holds that this prerogative of the permanent members is the greatest of the obstacles preventing the Council from fulfilling its mandate. It therefore renews its call for abolition of the veto and urges the Assembly to take steps to restrict use of the veto until it is finally abolished. Within the framework of the current consultations on reform of the Council, we would like to reaffirm Libya's adherence to the common African position issued by the Fifth African Union Summit, held in Sirte, Libya, on 4 and 5 July 2005, and later confirmed by the Extraordinary Summit of the African Union, held in Addis Ababa on 4 August 2005.

Maintenance of international peace and security is a noble goal of the United Nations. Undoubtedly, general and complete disarmament, starting with weapons of mass destruction, constitutes the essential component for achievement of this goal, which, however, will remain beyond reach unless all Member States cooperate in good faith and in a fully transparent manner. Libya has voluntarily abandoned all its programmes related to weapons of mass destruction and has expressed the hope that all States in possession of weapons of mass destruction or programmes for such weapons will follow its example.

It is important not to confuse weapons of mass destruction and nuclear non-proliferation with programmes for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Under international law, all States have the right to conduct research and develop their scientific capabilities for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Libya strongly rejects the use of double standards when dealing with this issue and the practice of discrimination between States with respect to nuclear non-proliferation.

The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission is an important step in promoting peace in countries emerging from conflict. We hope to see soon the achievements of this new body in Africa, where the African Union has been able, with the assistance of the international community, to achieve peace in several African countries. African peoples look forward to the assistance of the United Nations in the consolidation of peace in order to implement development programmes and combat poverty, disease and illiteracy.

Terrorism is a phenomenon that threatens international peace and security. Such a threat cannot be countered by the action of a single State or group of States. Furthermore, it is a problem that cannot be resolved through attribution to a particular religion or nationality. It is also shameful and unacceptable to describe the legitimate struggle of a people against foreign occupation as an act of terrorism.

Libya was among the first States that called for coordination of international efforts against international terrorism. Fifteen years ago it called for a special session of the General Assembly to study this phenomenon and develop measures to combat it and eradicate its root causes. It is high time to respond to that call so that we can coordinate our efforts, under the auspices of the United Nations, to study this phenomenon and reach a clear definition of terrorism that distinguishes between terrorism and the legitimate struggle of peoples for self-determination and independence.

The change of the Human Rights Commission into the Human Rights Council reflects the great attention the international community gives to enforcing human rights and guaranteeing basic freedoms. We hope that the inception of this Council's work will constitute a beginning towards addressing the issues impartially and non-discriminately, free from selectivity and double standards. We hope that human rights issues will not be used as a means of pressure against small nations. We emphasize that attempts by some States to use protection of human rights as a pretext to interfere in the internal affairs of other States will only lead to the destabilization of peace and security, causing more problems rather than solving outstanding ones.

Sustainable development is a major challenge facing developing countries. It is incumbent upon the United Nations to establish an international partnership for development that aims to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, based on the activation of dialogue between North and South. All this should be done within the framework of respect for sovereignty, equality and the sharing of benefits, guaranteeing the achievement of the agreed goal of a 0.7 per cent allocation of the gross national product of developed countries as development assistance to developing countries. Furthermore, such a partnership should guarantee the appropriate application of all principles of free multilateral trade and the enforcement of all measures related to special and preferential treatment for developing countries, within the framework of World Trade Organization, including facilitating the accession of developing countries to that organization.

Countries with a colonial past bear the greatest responsibility for assisting developing countries as compensation for the damage caused them during the colonial period. The big Powers that waged wars on the territories of developing countries must bear responsibility for demining and removal of explosive remnants left in those countries. They should begin immediately to provide maps and the necessary technical equipment for the rehabilitation of the affected lands in some of the developing countries.

The massacres and repression that are committed by Israeli occupation forces in occupied Palestine against the Palestinian people and the flagrant violations of human rights confirm that the so-called peace process is but a mirage that will not yield any results, particularly given the inability of the Security Council to take any action to protect the Palestinian people and to compel the occupation force to respect its commitments and stop its aggression and crimes against the Palestinian people. Libya therefore reiterates its emphasis that any proposed solutions that seek to impose a fait accompli will not resolve the Palestinian question, nor will they provide peace for the area. The only solution that can achieve peace is to guarantee the return of all Palestinian refugees to their homes and to establish a democratic State on the land of historical Palestine, in which Arabs and Jews live on equal footing, similar to South Africa, where blacks and whites manage to coexist after decades of conflict

and bloodshed. Unless that is achieved, the region will continue to live in a state of conflict, in which no one will enjoy any peace or security.

The recent Israeli aggression against Lebanon and its targeting of the infrastructure and civilians there emphasize the need for urgent action to compel the occupation forces to withdraw from the Sheba'a farms and return them to Lebanon. Additionally, urgent action is needed regarding the withdrawal from and return to Syria of the occupied Syrian Golan. The Israelis should be forced to pay reparations for the damage they caused in Lebanon due to their brutal aggression.

The situation in brotherly Iraq is a cause of sadness and concern. It is, in fact, a catastrophe brought about by an occupation that has left behind tens of thousands of dead and hundreds of thousands of wounded and handicapped persons. No matter how optimistic we may be, this catastrophic situation will not end as long as there are occupation forces in the country, forces that feed divisions inside Iraqi society and encourage sectarianism in Government institutions. We believe it is high time to stop the bloodshed in Iraq and find a solution to end the crisis so that all Iraqis may enjoy peace and security, as well as their basic rights, in a unified and democratic Iraq enjoying full sovereignty and free from foreign forces and bases.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Lamin Kaba Bajo, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia.

Mr. Bajo (Gambia): My delegation extends our heartiest congratulations to Ms. Al-Khalifa on her election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. Her election signifies a most welcome rebalancing of the General Assembly towards greater gender parity and will certainly bring a breath of fresh air to our deliberations. We hope also that it will help our Organization address those issues of war, conflict, oppression, deprivation and terrorism that dog today's world with the kind of compassion and sensitivity known only to mothers. I would like to assure her of my delegation's fullest cooperation and support at all times.

The outgoing President, Mr. Jan Eliasson, applied all his wisdom and vast diplomatic experience in presiding over a session fraught with difficult and exceedingly complex organizational reform issues. We thank him for guiding us deep into the process and wish him well in his new assignment.

We should not delude ourselves into thinking that reforming the United Nations is a task that can be achieved quickly. The issues are contentious and multifaceted, and only deep reflection and determined negotiation over time will see us through. For this reason, we should not feel disheartened that one year after the World Summit we have still not concluded the process. We should congratulate ourselves on having achieved a breakthrough with the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. Management reform is problematic, but the desire to achieve it in a fair and balanced manner will remain a key demand of developing countries. A selective approach to reforming the Organization will work in no one's interest. Some reforms are long overdue and sorely needed.

For us in Africa, Security Council reform is urgent and must be concluded as soon as possible. Recent events have demonstrated that the old dispensation is ill equipped to grapple with the complexities of the world we live in today. Reform, I repeat, is urgent if today's Security Council is to be seen as poised to take on the new global peace and security challenges facing mankind.

We are gathered together at a time of great uncertainty and, for many, despair because of our collective inability and lack of will to abide by the guiding principles of our founding fathers. We have not been too successful in preventing the scourge of war or in addressing the factors that give rise to war.

Rather than abating, the situation in the Middle East continues to fester and, in fact, deteriorate, as the Road Map leading to a two-State solution to the Palestinian-Israeli problem eludes us further. My delegation has repeatedly decried the lack of will on the part of the protagonists to work towards a speedy solution to this problem, which continues to spawn many other conflicts in other regions of the world.

It is a matter of deep regret that this world body watched almost helplessly as a Member State — Lebanon — was attacked and made to suffer extensive destruction to infrastructure, property and human life. Although we have been able to bring about a cessation of hostilities, we cannot claim to have achieved peace. All the conditions for a resumption of the conflict remain intact. We must address those conditions more

resolutely. We must also do everything within our power to ensure that the problem between Hizbollah and Israel does not pull in other countries of the region and lead to full scale war between them and Israel. The consequences would be disastrous for us all.

My delegation condemns in the strongest terms Israel's continued illegal occupation of Palestinian territory and Arab lands, its intensive military campaign in the West Bank and Gaza, which has resulted in untold civilian casualties and extensive destruction of infrastructure, and its arrest and detention of thousands of Palestinian civilians and their leaders. The Hamas Government in Palestine was elected democratically by the Palestinian people, who, by the tenets of democracy which we all claim to espouse, are the only ones who may freely choose their leaders. Or are we to understand that this basic tenet of democracy should apply only if the leaders chosen are to our liking and meet with our approval? I urge all peace-loving and democratic members of the international community to assist the Hamas Government to play its role as a representative of its people in a responsible, democratic and dignified manner.

In Iraq, the unresolved conflict has now become uncontrollable and has all but degenerated into civil war. We must look for imaginative ways of stabilizing that situation and bringing the widespread killings, destruction and suffering to an end.

We must show leadership. Double standards have affected the effectiveness of our response to the peace and security needs of the Middle East for far too long and have only muddied the waters further. The people of the region must now enjoy some respite and be given the space to pursue their development in an atmosphere of peace, tranquillity and security. It is becoming increasingly clear that the only remaining honest broker that can ensure that this happens is the United Nations. We must step up to the plate.

Violence in Afghanistan appears to be re-escalating. The United Nations must join hands with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and other partners to engage all concerned in dialogue, with a view to addressing the factors that are driving the hostilities to which the long-suffering people of this great country are subjected.

While we must obviously intervene to contain and arrest raging conflicts, we must not be oblivious to the need to pay equal attention to nascent conflict situations. One such situation is that which is prevailing across the Taiwan Strait, where the People's Republic of China has openly threatened Taiwan with military intervention, should it as much as express an intention to declare itself independent. In addition, the People's Republic of China has increased its arsenal of missiles trained on Taiwan to over 800 warheads. It goes without saying that a deterioration of the situation into all-out war will only provoke an unwelcome mix of responses from allies within and without the region, responses that could cause a conflagration that would make the Middle East situation pale in comparison.

In Africa, the good news is that peace continues to spread. From Sierra Leone and Liberia to Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we are witnessing a growing preference for non-violent approaches to conflict resolution. We should persist so that this trend continues and embraces countries such as Somalia and the Sudan, with its Darfur imbroglio.

In Somalia, the central Government should be assisted to stand firmly on its own two feet and exercise control over the entire Somali territory. The international community must take every precaution to prevent Somalia from becoming a haven for terrorists and other extremists.

In the case of the Sudan, my delegation appeals to the brotherly people of that great country to intensify dialogue with the international community in its quest for a resolution of the Darfur crisis. In reaching a final decision on whether or not the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) should pass the baton to a United Nations peacekeeping force, we are certain that, with a bit more effort on all sides, a way will be found out of the present impasse.

While we must all work in concert to fight terrorism, we must also endeavour not to lose respect for fundamental human rights and civil liberties in the process. In addition, we must increase our cooperation in this fight and strengthen political and diplomatic interventions in order to win it. No matter how many resources or how much firepower are committed to combating the phenomenon, without international cooperation of this type, our efforts will come to naught. Recent developments in countries like Iraq have shown that to be the case.

Last year, we all rededicated ourselves to the full implementation of the Millennium Declaration. There

are ample indications today that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are not likely to be met in most of sub-Saharan Africa if present trends continue. It is clear that we must all do more to identify and help remove the bottlenecks that are inhibiting progress towards them. We must address the serious capacity constraints that circumscribe the development efforts of many an African country. We must help stimulate economic growth through enabling policy measures that empower our countries for greater and more meaningful participation in world trade. We must make real progress in the Doha round. We must increase foreign direct investment in the African economy. We must honour our commitment to increasing official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of gross national income. We must, in partnership, attack the great health scourges of our time, namely, HIV/AIDS and malaria.

In the Gambia, United Nations and other independent assessments indicate that, on many fronts, we are making steady progress. We are committed to achieving the MDGs, in addition to the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development.

We have reversed the spread of HIV/AIDS. We have already achieved gender parity in education and, by extension, registered significant progress in gender equality, equity and the empowerment of women. We have brought potable water and good sanitation to over 70 per cent of our people. We have reduced the prevalence of malaria and the incidence of maternal and under-five mortality. We have attained 100 per cent child immunization coverage. We have significantly increased access to education at all levels and shall meet the basic education goal, God willing, next year or the year after. Our sharpest focus is on poverty reduction, and we are determined to attain that goal before 2015.

We have been able to achieve these gains, in spite of the severe resource constraints that we face, because of determined and committed leadership and our strong resolve to live up to our commitments to the international community.

According to the expert assessments of the United Nations agencies, the Gambia is among the very few African countries that will achieve the MDGs on target, if present trends continue. Our achievements in relation to the development agenda have been made possible only through strong and genuine partnerships, which we hope will continue and will grow to meet the task ahead.

The trade policy of our Government continues to be guided by the principles of liberalization, deregulation and investment promotion. We have brought about a progressive reduction of tariffs and continued improvements in infrastructure to increase our competitiveness as a production and trade gateway into West Africa.

We regard the private sector as an important engine of growth. Therefore, to further enhance its development, our Government has formulated policies for the systematic strengthening of the small and medium-sized enterprise sector of our economy. It is our hope that implementation of these policies will lead to the creation of conditions conducive to the speedy attraction of high levels of foreign direct investment which will, in turn, stimulate the growth of employment and incomes and lead to significant reductions in the incidence of poverty among the Gambian people.

We are conscious of the need for all our development partners to speak to us with one voice so as to increase coherence in the partnership. To this end, we have this year encouraged our major multilateral partners — the World Bank, the African Development Bank Group, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and its Millennium Project — to work together with us in crafting a coherent Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper which will form the basis for a coordinated framework of partnership in development.

The President returned to the Chair.

There are many commendable programmes and initiatives designed to assist countries like the Gambia. The Group of Eight initiatives for Africa, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the Blair Commission for Africa, the Millennium Challenge Account and the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development, inter alia, will have an impact only if they do not raise the bar unrealistically high, such that the countries they are meant to assist are unable to meet the stringent criteria for gaining access to the funds. If aid is to be meaningful, it must be accessible, predictable and not fragmented. Moreover, a well-designed aid architecture that

involves recipients in critical aspects of decision-making is part of the answer for achieving the much-sought effectiveness of official development assistance, a subject of concern in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Yet, while those programmes and initiatives may encourage many least developed countries in their hopes for early relief, in reality, the accompanying enablers have not been forthcoming. The Doha Round is in limbo, our modest economic growth is being threatened by unpredictably high energy prices, and debt relief is still on the distant horizon. For many of us, it is one step forward before world economic trends take us two steps back. Of even greater concern is the fact that this plethora of initiatives has hardly made a dent in the poverty situation in our countries. The blueprints are manifold, the responses too few. Unfulfilled promises only dash our hopes, leave us frustrated and diminish our faith in the effectiveness of international partnerships for development.

We in the Gambia continue to deepen our democracy. Just four days ago, the Gambian electorate went to the polls to once again choose their leader in a free and fair manner. Let me take this opportunity to convey the thanks and appreciation of His Excellency Al Hadji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh to the many delegations that have expressed to him their congratulations and best wishes on his resounding victory at the elections. The President considers that victory to be a mandate from the Gambian electorate to continue his service to the Gambian people and, indeed, to the international community at large. Our electoral process has been acclaimed throughout the world for its openness, fairness and transparency.

The subject of the High-level Dialogue held just a few days ago was international migration and development. For the very first time, we had the courage to address that issue within the walls of the United Nations — and rightly so, for international migration has been at the core of human history. It has driven the spread of human knowledge and civilization. It has enriched cultures and societies and caused mankind to make great leaps in science, technology, engineering and overall social and economic development. We are all migrants. Therefore, let us approach the issue of international migration with humanity, tolerance, respect and compassion.

Attempts to penalize or criminalize international migration will not work. In our globalized village, international migration is an undeniable, positive and indispensable force for keeping the wheels of national economies and human society in motion. We must look to the positive side of this natural human activity and desist from actions that trample on the dignity of migrants, as well as from acts of racism, xenophobia and abuse of human rights.

As the saying goes, injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. For decades, extensive illegal and extraterritorial measures have been pursued against Cuba, a small, friendly and democratic nation. They have not worked and will never work. My delegation joins the vast majority of the members of the international community in calling for the lifting of the decades-long embargo against Cuba in order to enable the hard-working people of that great country to pursue their development aspirations in an atmosphere of peace. Let us all strive to live and let live.

By the same token, we must also urgently address the question of Taiwan. The legitimate quest of the people of Taiwan for a voice and standing in the United Nations must be ignored no longer. Taiwan is an important actor in our global economy and contributes immensely to global peace and security. It must be formally granted recognition as a responsible member of the international community. A simple way to grant that recognition would be to give Taiwan its rightful place in the United Nations.

In that connection, the Government of the Gambia wishes to strongly protests the General Committee's violation of the rules of procedure on 12 September this year by amalgamating two items proposed by its members into one agenda item, thus preventing members from participating in the discussion of those items. We will therefore require a legal opinion from the United Nations on an expedited basis to ensure that we are provided with the opportunity to engage in a debate on that issue, as we are duly entitled to do.

Before I conclude, let me salute, commend and bid farewell to one of Africa's outstanding personalities, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, since this will be the last General Assembly session during his tenure as Secretary-General. President Al Hadji Yahya Jammeh had the honour to pay tribute to him during the Summit of Heads of State and Government

of the African Union held in Banjul in July. Therefore, I should like to say only that the Government and the people of the Gambia salute his leadership, his astute diplomatic skills, his demonstrated commitment to international peace, security and development, and his unswerving faith in the international system. Mr. Annan's term as Secretary-General may be ending, but I am sure that he will continue to be there for us and will willingly come to the rescue when we need his wisdom and vast experience in mediating complex global problems. We wish him well in his future endeavours, and we wish him and his family continued good health and happiness in their new life.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Antonio Isaac Monteiro, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Monteiro (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation from French text provided by the delegation*): The sixty-first session of the General Assembly has begun its work in quite a disturbing context. We note the persistence of certain conflicts and the emergence of new hot spots of tension, which are serious threats to international peace and stability. World poverty and hunger have not decreased, despite the enormous efforts of our countries to improve the living conditions of our populations. In fact, we note a deterioration in the social and health conditions of millions of people as a result of endemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, particularly on the African continent.

The political, economic, financial, social and environmental problems facing the world are assuming increasingly alarming proportions. That requires concerted efforts on the part of the entire international community. Therefore, we must work together to strengthen the existing multilateral system and the capacity of the United Nations to act in order to address those challenges more effectively.

Our people expect concrete, swift and effective measures from the Organization, involving the establishment of modern and efficient operational structures. In short, reforms within the United Nations system are necessary and urgent.

It is in that context that, on behalf of my country, Guinea-Bissau, which it is my honour to represent, I warmly congratulate you, Madam, on your election as President of the General Assembly at the present session. We believe that your many qualities and your long experience are guarantees of the success of our work. Under your guidance, we will experience a new dynamism capable of promoting joint efforts for peace. I would like to assure you of the availability and full cooperation of our delegation in contributing to the achievement of the our common goals.

Allow me to congratulate your predecessor as well, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his dedication to the cause of our Organization and for the important results achieved during the sixtieth session. I reference in particular to the creation of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, of which my country is a member.

We recently participated in the fourteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana, where a large number of world leaders gathered. Those eminent personalities, including the head of State of Guinea-Bissau, considered the world's problems, the seriousness of which calls to us all and demands of us concerted and collective actions. The conclusions reached at the Summit, as well as the initiatives we intend to undertake on behalf of our Movement, are in line, to a large extent, with the opinions, recommendations and solutions set out by the Secretary-General in his annual report on the work of the Organization, delivered during a brilliant speech to the Assembly.

None today can doubt the seriousness of the situation in the Middle East, particularly in Lebanon. It is the same with regard to the tragic conditions in which millions of our African brothers live in Darfur. It is clear that we can no longer accept the systematic violation of international norms. Nor can we understand why we are incapable of taking concerted, negotiated and responsible measures to put an end to a tragic situation that threatens the lives of innocent and vulnerable people. Our brothers in Darfur have the right to the compassion and solidarity of Africa in particular, and of the international community as a whole.

If current trends in the world continue, poor countries will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The reforms that are planned or that have already been introduced into our systems of governance, respect for the rules of democracy and respect for human rights are,

unfortunately, insufficient to achieve the rates of growth essential to relaunch our economies.

In our countries, the economic and financial situation depends on internal and external factors that we do not control. Protectionist measures and subsidies for agricultural products such as cotton, sugar and wheat seriously compromise the competitive capacity of our farmers. The absence of an agreement on the rules that should govern international trade and the lack of political will and of progress in the negotiations within the World Trade Organization are aggravating factors.

We need to recognize that we are far from achieving the objectives set out in the Monterrey Consensus and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, which concern developing countries, particularly the least developed countries. We also feel the imbalance in the globalization process. These are serious obstacles to our development. The midterm review for the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 has indeed shed new light on the shortcomings and on the still-insufficient level of development assistance. In this environment, our efforts to eliminate poverty and create better living conditions within our countries are at risk.

A large part of our populations, particularly our young people, are more and more despondent because of the very high level of unemployment and lack of hope for a better future. Thousands of young people are so desperate that they even risk their lives to seek other forms of existence, which, unfortunately, often turn out to be mirages. The international community must accord greater attention to this issue so that we might find the means to ensure the rebirth of hope in the hearts of our youth. I am thinking especially of creating professional training centres and promoting activities that generate jobs, thus ensuring more and better social integration.

I would also like to stress in this regard the importance of the High-level Meeting on International Migration and Development, which for the first time met here at the Headquarters of the United Nations. I am convinced that thanks to this type of dialogue and cooperation at the international level, we will be better equipped to put a brake on illegal immigration and on organized crime, to which this tragic phenomenon is more and more linked.

Guinea-Bissau, with a considerable number of citizens living abroad, pays particular attention to the issue of migration. Therefore we welcome the place it occupies on the agenda of the international community. We support the relevant recommendations emerging from the High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development that took place here in New York, two weeks ago. We are aware of the role played by our diaspora in the economy of developing countries, thanks to remittances and other forms of contributions. My country is committed to developing an appropriate national policy on this issue in cooperation with our development partners, especially with the countries of destination.

On 17 July Guinea-Bissau hosted the sixteenth Conference of the Heads of State Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP). The heads of State of our community reaffirmed their determination to step up efforts to eradicate hunger and poverty. They also committed themselves to undertaking concrete measures to mobilize internal and external resources for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The consolidation of democracy, the rule of law and human rights issues were also subjects of particular attention for these leaders. They are indispensable preconditions for international peace and security. The heads of State also decided to strengthen relations between the CPLP and the United Nations and its specialized agencies in order to establish an effective partnership.

Allow me in this respect to thank, on behalf of the CPLP, all our partners for the important assistance they have given to the weakest members of our community. I would also like to appeal to our development partners in general and to the Group of Eight countries in particular, requesting that they assist us in addressing the critical issue of external debt burden.

One year after elections in Guinea-Bissau, which confirmed the return to constitutional normality in my country, I should like to reiterate here the commitment of the people, Government and especially that of Mr. João Bernardo Vieira, President of Guinea-Bissau, to spare no effort in consolidating peace and establishing political stability and national reconciliation. Significant progress has been made in this area. It must, however, be stressed that the complexity of the current reforms, especially within the defence and security forces, requires lasting and

substantial support from the international community, given the lack of resources available to us.

I would like to express our appreciation to all our partners, especially our brothers in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), for their support and the creation of the International Contact Group on Guinea-Bissau, whose first meeting was held here at the United Nations Headquarters last week. I would also like to take this opportunity to reaffirm that my country will spare no effort to continue to deserve your confidence and solidarity. Nonetheless, it must be stressed that, despite our willingness and determination, Guinea-Bissau needs your urgent assistance in order to implement the measures contained in the national poverty reduction strategy paper. Just adopted by our Government, that document will serve as the basis for preparing a roundtable on Guinea-Bissau planned for next November at Geneva. It is a pleasure to invite all our traditional partners and others here present to take part in that roundtable, which will, indeed, be an event of great importance for stimulating our economy and for raising the living conditions of our people.

Today's world is a genuine global village. Mankind's progress in science, information technology, communications and transportation means that the destinies of our peoples are more and more interdependent. That is why we must combine our efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger in the world and to deal with endemic diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, and to put an end to injustices, violations of human rights and all forms of discrimination and intolerance.

When we discuss the issues of development and combating poverty, we must resist the temptation of taking the easy way and applying simplistic solutions. Economic and social development and its corollary, the eradication of poverty, require deep thought and courageous measures. No phenomenon can be explained simplistically, and there is no simple universal recipe. The signs of the times must be correctly interpreted. Peoples' opinions, their culture, their religious practices and their concerns must all be understood and respected. We must find new ways of reorganizing and strengthening democratic States by giving priority to education and training. We must also think about the need to increase our collective capacity to combat terrorism and to deal with all forms of extremism through permanent dialogue between cultures and civilizations.

It is incomprehensible, and even less acceptable, that human beings are abandoned and condemned to die under the indifferent regard of the international community. International solidarity towards vulnerable populations must not be delayed or be given under post mortem conditions. The international community must demonstrate vigilance and be capable of preventing all humanitarian catastrophes resulting from conflicts, as the Secretary-General rightly recalled, in the name of a universal conscience. It is precisely because of the universal nature of the responsibility of our Organization that Guinea-Bissau will spare no effort in order to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations through concerted, pragmatic and efficient reforms. In fact, the effectiveness of our Organization would be even greater with the full participation of all Member States with a view to enhancing our multilateral institution, which needs greater democracy and transparency in fulfilling its mandate.

More than sixty years after its founding, the United Nations must adapt to the changes that have taken place in the world in order to take into account the existence and the emergence of new players on the world stage whose contribution to peacekeeping and international security are becoming more and more important. Among those States are countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, which can legitimately lay claim to a permanent seat on the Security Council. Developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America have the right to greater participation and prominence on the Security Council.

Ten years ago, we elected Kofi Annan, an outstanding son of Africa, to guide the destiny of our Organization. As we assess his tenure, it is with pride and satisfaction that we note the achievements during his term of office. Recent years have not been easy, because the world is confronting new and longstanding challenges in various forms and scales and for which our Organization was insufficiently designed and prepared. On behalf of Guinea-Bissau, the President of Guinea-Bissau, João Bernardo Vieira, and our Government, I would like to add our voice to the vibrant tribute paid by the entire international community to the Secretary-General. I would also like to express the gratitude of our people to him for the contribution of the United Nations system in promoting

peace, political stability and development in our country.

The great challenges of the new millennium will determine the development work facing us and the capacity of people to resolve, as quickly as possible, problems of peace, political stability, national reconciliation and social justice. All States and civil society must be able to count upon, whenever required, the transparent and democratic functioning of the United Nations system for the defence of their rights, in a perspective that creates consensus and which is compatible with human development, namely compatible with the well-being of humanity.

As the General Assembly prepares to select a successor to Mr. Kofi Annan, it will, I am convinced, be able to elect a Secretary-General with the essential attributes of skill, experience and dedication for promoting better understanding between peoples and nations of this world.

The determination and leadership of the next Secretary-General will also be necessary in order to establish synergy and international cooperation so as to transform the United Nations into a unique and irreplaceable instrument that can strengthen multilateralism in favour of development, of improved conservation of our planet and of international peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Le Cong Phung, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam.

Mr. Le Cong Phung (Viet Nam): Madam President, at the outset, on behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, may I extend our warmest congratulations to you, the third woman in United Nations history to be elected as President of the General Assembly. I am confident that, under your wise leadership, this sixty-first session will be crowned with success. I also wish to convey our deep appreciation for the tremendous efforts undertaken and active contributions made by His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson during his presidency of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session.

As His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan's last term of duty as Secretary-General of the United Nations comes to a close, I wish, on behalf of the Vietnamese Government, to express our deep appreciation for his dedication and commitment to our Organization. His visit to Viet Nam last May was another milestone in the history of the ever-growing Viet Nam-United Nations cooperative relationship.

The 2005 World Summit lit up our hopes for the achievement by the international community of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set out by our leaders at the Millennium Summit in 2000. One year has elapsed, and, regrettably, the picture of the world we see today is made up of paradoxes. Although the trend of peace, cooperation and development continues to prevail, so do the unilateral use of force, escalation of regional and ethnic conflicts and international terrorism. We have also seen serious hardships faced by developing countries under the pressure of globalization, and inequality in international economic relations. Poverty, epidemics, drugs and transnational crime pose even greater threats to hundreds of millions of people around the world.

Against this backdrop, in the view of the Vietnamese delegation, continued joint efforts to create a favourable environment for the achievement of the MDGs are even more imperative. We consider the theme chosen for this sixty-first session of the General Assembly, focusing on global partnership for development, to be highly relevant.

Peace and socio-political stability are indispensable to development. In turn, positive economic development and improved living standards of people help to consolidate peace and stability in every country and region and the world as a whole. It is essential that nations work together to settle differences and disputes through dialogue, abandon the use of force in their relations and fully comply with the United Nations Charter and international law in order to build a peaceful and stable environment in the interest of all.

I wish to reaffirm Viet Nam's strong support for efforts to reach early peaceful settlements of international and regional conflicts and differences, including the nuclear issues on the Korean Peninsula and in Iran, and the crisis in the Middle East, where the recent hostilities in Lebanon, which caused heavy loss of innocent life and destruction of the country's infrastructure, serve as a typical example of harm brought about by unilateral actions.

In this connection, I wish to state Viet Nam's consistent policy of supporting the just struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable rights. I call on all parties concerned to implement the United Nations

Security Council resolutions on the Middle East, including resolution 1701 (2006), and soon arrive at a fair and lasting solution for peace and stability in the region.

Viet Nam is deeply concerned by the upsurge of terrorism in the world. We will continue to support the joint efforts of the international community to combat terrorism on the basis of the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, as well as respect for national sovereignty. The deep roots of terrorism, including poverty, inequality and injustice, must be eliminated. What should also be mentioned here is the unfortunate reality that, in many cases, the suppression of terrorist organizations, including those targeting Viet Nam, is being undertaken selectively, with double standards. It is our view that such conduct may leave room for more international terrorist acts.

Achievements in science and technology, especially information technology, and globalization have brought about great opportunities for all countries. They have also brought about the dark side of international economic relations. A widened development gap between the rich and the poor poses potential threats to world peace and security. In the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit, our leaders called for the establishment of a global partnership for development to enhance cooperation in all financial, trade and investment areas and called for increased assistance to developing countries, considering that such steps by the international community would contribute to establishing a favourable environment for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Such global partnership is yet to be seen, and we are concerned with increasing adverse impacts of globalization. The failure of the Doha Round, the strengthening of protectionism in a number of developed countries and fluctuating oil and gold prices are causing more and more difficulties for developing nations in their efforts to achieve the MDGs. A typical example of this situation is the anti-dumping tariff imposed on Vietnamese catfish and shrimp in past years and on footwear at present; this measure is affecting the lives of millions of poor people. It runs counter to World Trade Organization (WTO) rules and the spirit of trade liberalization pursued by Member States. It should also be pointed out that the increased integration of developing nations in the world economy is indeed an important element in ensuring the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Developing countries should be supported and assisted to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) as early as possible. Non-tariff barriers under the guise of hygiene and safety standards, among others, should be removed to facilitate developing countries to access the markets of the developed economies. We have on many occasions expressed our view that, in our times, embargo and sanctions are completely obsolete policies. We once again call for an early lifting of the unilateral economic and trade embargo against Cuba.

Viet Nam welcomes the fact that a number of countries have set up road maps to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance without any conditions. Technology transfer, capacity-building and human resource development should be further promoted. We welcome initiatives to settle the debts of poor countries, the solutions outlined in the Monterrey Consensus and the recent efforts of the international community towards this end. The United Nations should work out, especially at the national level, measures to further incorporate the MDGs in the implementation of global commitments undertaken during the past decade in the areas of women, children, population, development, HIV/AIDS prevention, housing, environment and social development.

Viet Nam supports efforts to strengthen multilateral mechanisms in which the United Nations plays a central role with a view to building and ensuring a peaceful and stable environment in the world. The United Nations should be reformed to improve its effectiveness, democratization and modes of operation on the basis of the fundamental principles enshrined in its Charter.

While welcoming initial successes in the United Nations reform process, such as the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, we realize that much remains to be done. Measures are needed to consolidate the central role and power of the General Assembly. The Security Council should also be reformed in both its composition and methods of work to ensure that it really represents the concerns and interests of all United Nations Members as stipulated in the Charter.

Viet Nam has made remarkable progress in implementing the MDGs and we are in a good position to meet the 2015 deadline. Based on our own experience, we believe that each country should, first and foremost, strive to create and maintain a peaceful environment for development, mobilize broad participation by people of all walks of life in poverty reduction efforts and reserve preferential treatments for the poor, vulnerable groups and people living in remote and difficult areas, with a view to helping them catch up with the majority. Furthermore, effective prevention of natural disasters and mitigation of their consequences are crucial factors.

To create a peaceful environment for national development, Viet Nam will continue with its foreign policy of sovereign independence, peace, cooperation and development. We continue to be a friend and reliable partner of all countries in the international community striving for peace and cooperation and we will continue to actively participate in regional and international cooperation.

We are in the final stage leading to accession to the World Trade Organization. Viet Nam is also running for non-permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council for the term 2008-2009. In pursuing our policy of international integration and in contributing to the common endeavours of the international community, we look forward to continued support from all Members of the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Belela Herrera, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay.

Ms. Herrera (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Madam President, I bring to you the greeting of the people and Government of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay to this Assembly. This Assembly is the broadest and most representative and important forum in the world today.

Madam President, may I express my personal satisfaction at seeing you exercise such an important function and I am sure that as a woman you will be able to add to the office an additional share of moderation and restraint.

In Uruguay, like the United Nations, we feel that it is very important to preach by example. That is why the Government I represent has also assumed, among its many tasks, that of elevating the status of women and increasing their participation in various areas.

Likewise, I am very happy to bring to you a special message from the President of Uruguay, Mr. Tabaré Vásquez, for the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to thank him for his unrelenting efforts to drive the immense process of reforming the Organization. My country and the other Members of this house are fully committed to this reform.

On the occasion of the sixteenth Ibero-American Summit that will take place in Uruguay, the countries of the conference will express to the Secretary-General their thanks for his outstanding work. I would also like to say that the main subject of the Summit will be migration and development. Recently, we had a very constructive high-level dialogue on this subject in this house.

A year ago, during the sixtieth session of this forum, the President of our country said that the commitment of Uruguay to the United Nations Organization is both demanding and hopeful.

Our commitment is demanding because of the challenges that the current world faces and because of the opportunities implicit in the present, upon the management of which our future depends.

Our commitment is hopeful. Although we realize that there are difficulties and limitations on the international scene and at the regional and national levels, we believe in human beings, we believe in society, we believe in democracy as a common house and in freedom as the mother tongue of humanity.

The Eastern Republic of Uruguay reaffirms the principles that characterize our foreign policy, namely, our commitment to peace, sovereignty, democracy and solidarity; a firm rejection of all types of terrorism, violence and discrimination; the inalienable right of countries to have stable and secure borders and to fully exercise their sovereignty and self-determination; the respect for international law as a guarantee of sovereignty of peoples and their peaceful cohabitation; non-intervention in the internal affairs of States; multilateralism as a way of strengthening international law and as a way to organize the role of the United Nations; and the recognition of the indivisibility of all human rights, be they political, social, economic, civil or cultural, including collective rights, such as the right to development and the environment. Consequently, our country feels that progress in reforming the Organization must be achieved and we are making our contribution to that process, which will enable the

United Nations to fulfil its tasks with greater effectiveness.

Greater effectiveness should also be sought by the important recently created bodies, the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. Uruguay is already actively participating in the Human Rights Council and we hope to join the organizing committee of the Peacebuilding Commission.

As a country that is a major contributor of troops and in support of the goal of peacekeeping, we have participated in peacekeeping missions since the creation of this Organization. The most recent example of this our active undertaking and participation in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which is an essential mechanism for securing a lasting peace and for restoring the social fabric of a dear Latin American nation.

Likewise, Uruguay would like to renew its active commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as agreed to by the Heads of State and Government. When I say "active", I say this as a reflection of how much progress has been made towards the goals set forth in the agreement signed in September 2005.

I cannot refer now to each of these goals at this time, but one of the main goals is "the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger". In Uruguay, by means of the interaction of various governmental programmes, we have implemented an emergency social plan that deals with the most basic needs of those in extreme poverty.

Poverty has begun to decrease, dropping from 32.6 per cent of the recorded population in 2004 to 29.8 per cent at the end of 2005. We feel that this is still not sufficient, but it is progress, not only in terms of social protection, but also in terms of social integration.

This is so because the great problems that have produced poverty in our country, as in other countries, are not just hunger, the lack of housing, illiteracy, academic failure or teenage pregnancies, but also discrimination, stigmatization, insecurity and despair, indeed, situations that indicate being integrated in society is much more than subsisting.

Social integration is essential, too, because the right to participate in social life also involves recognizing individuals as active citizens and not just as people who need to be helped.

And social integration is key, because the right that our citizens are asking for — all of them, even the poorest — is not just the right to live, but also the right to be recognized as individuals and the right to live together in society. This is called democracy and citizenship.

Allow me from this important podium and on behalf of the Government I represent to refer to three matters of particular importance for our country. One of them has to do with the facts of the recent past. There can be no future without memory, no freedom without justice. That is why, within the framework of legislation in force, Uruguay is taking concrete steps to heal the wounds caused by the violation of human rights during the dictatorship that ruled the country between 1973 and 1985. It has been difficult work and it is also very difficult to learn and accept the truth, but it does strengthen democracy as a form of Government and condition in society. Moreover, truth and justice help to ensure that the horrors of the past are never repeated.

I am very happy to inform this General Assembly that my country has taken one further step in the promotion and defence of human rights. The Uruguayan parliament has just unanimously approved a bill on genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and cooperation with the International Criminal Court.

Another subject that relates to the current situation and the future is climate change and the degradation of the environment. Uruguay is a party to the main international conventions in this area and, while stressing the indispensable international cooperation on this subject, we do particularly stress, once again, the individual responsibility of each State to actively protect the environment in its territory and waters and to make the vigilant participation of civil society a high priority.

It is not enough to simply protest pernicious transfers of polluting industrial processes. It is incumbent upon the State to act firmly to be vigilant and monitor and to impose high environmental standards on foreign and domestic companies.

Uruguay receives significant investment for industrial development on its territory, but we have very strict controls on the environmental aspects of

those investments and we apply an internationally recognized standard that reflects our motto "Natural Uruguay". We require the use of the most modern technologies available, and we monitor effectively, on the ground, the environmental effects of such ventures.

The Government of Uruguay reiterates its commitment to the protection of the environment in all parts of the world as a human right and as the cornerstone for achieving true sustainable development. In this sense, Uruguay calls upon the international community, and particularly the donor countries, to increase their cooperation in the area of the environment for developing countries and assume in a responsible manner global environmental goals that involve shared but differentiated responsibilities for everyone.

Finally, I would like to address our commitment to the strengthening of the multilateral trading system and the need to bring the Doha Development Round to a successful conclusion, in order to ensure that the development dimension is reflected in specific results and not just programmatic measures. For that, it is important to resume, as soon as possible, the negotiations in Geneva, always bearing in mind that we will not achieve satisfactory results without the elimination of agricultural subsidies, in the form of exports that receive internal support and the significant opening up of access to markets, particularly in the developed countries.

Everyone here in this Hall knows that there is no peace in intolerance and terrorism, and there is no freedom in poverty, nor democracy in inequality. We reaffirm our conviction that these threats can only be overcome if we join our efforts together and fully appreciate the wealth of our own cultural diversity, both among nations as well as within our respective nations.

Among nations, we must rely on the respect of our traditions and cultures and a broad-based dialogue among them in order to find useful synergies. And within each of our countries, we must rely on active policies promoting social cohesion that embrace our very cultural, ethnic and religious diversities. We have to move from words to acts, from declarations to action. This is not easy, but it is essential.

We are not starting from zero. The brief history of this Organization is testament to that.

But we still have a lot of work to do. It is a large task which, honestly, will never end and the results will never be perfect.

But these zones of continuity and imperfection establish the ideals that call on us to act and the commitments that drive us forward.

If this sixty-first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations is able to help us in this task, it will have fulfilled its mission.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Kalombo Mwansa, Special Envoy of the Government of Zambia.

Mr. Mwansa (Zambia): On behalf of the Zambian delegation, I congratulate you, Madam President, on your election as President of the sixty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly. It is indeed significant to have a lady holding the highest office of the General Assembly after almost three decades. To us, this attests to the commitment of the United Nations to the principle of gender equality.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome a new member to the United Nations, the Republic of Montenegro.

Madam President, I wish to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, the Foreign Minister of Sweden, who successfully presided over the sixtieth session. He rendered selfless commitment and devotion to the search for consensus on a number of issues, including the 2005 World Summit Outcome. It is pleasing to note that during his presidency, a number of decisions were taken, including the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council.

Allow me to also pay fitting tribute to the outgoing Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the outstanding leadership he has provided to our Organization, particularly in his efforts to reform it into a more vibrant and accountable body. His vision and stewardship of the Organization has set the United Nations on a new course. We wish him well in his future endeavours as he leaves office. It is now up to us Member States to summon sufficient will to make his vision a reality.

The world today is faced with challenges of extreme poverty and underdevelopment, conflicts among and between nations and terrorism, which have

given rise to increased insecurity all over the world. In addition, human trafficking is on the increase worldwide. Often, innocent women and children in search of a better life, are sold and made to engage in illicit activities. That is a gross violation of human rights, which must be seriously addressed by the international community.

The 2005 Summit Outcome set a global agenda to address those challenges. Much has been achieved, but more remains to be done if we are to build a world body that is effective and relevant to the challenges faced. Indeed, as Mr. Kofi Annan has indicated in his "In Larger Freedom" report,

> "we will not enjoy development without security, we will not enjoy security without development, and we will not enjoy either without respect for human rights." (*A/59/2005, para. 17*)

The guiding principles of the United Nations Charter incorporate the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We believe that without the protection of those rights and freedoms, meaningful development cannot be achieved.

As one of the 47 Member States elected to the newly established Human Rights Council, Zambia is committed to upholding the tenets of human rights in our country and the world at large. In that regard, Zambia commends the United Nations for establishing the Human Rights Council, and as a pioneer member, pledges to give it all the support that it will require. We commit ourselves to assist in formulating rules and structures designed to ensure a strong Council that is transparent, non-selective and non-politicized and that promotes dialogue and cooperation among Member States.

I am pleased to state that Zambia has made progress in consolidating human rights and good governance. Zambia has further strengthened the rule of law and upheld the highest standards of individual freedoms for all citizens, without discrimination based on sex, colour, race or religious affiliation. In that regard, we appeal to the international community to assist us to strengthen and build the capacities of human rights institutions and all related institutions that have an important role to play in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Permit me at this juncture to thank the international community for electing Zambia to the Human Rights Council, with the second highest number of votes.

With regard to increased global insecurity, Zambia reaffirms that a new vision of collective security is required. Member States of the United Nations expect the collective mechanism to address threats, such as war, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, organized crime and civil conflict, infectious diseases, extreme poverty and environmental degradation. If the United Nations is to strengthen the operations of that collective mechanism, Member States must work through the United Nations Security Council and other United Nations agencies to develop stronger anti-terrorism, nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and crime prevention regimes.

Zambia will continue to actively pursue measures intended to curtail terrorism through various actions, including taking appropriate national legislative reforms. To that end, we welcome the recent adoption by the General Assembly of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and look forward to the adoption of the comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

Our Organization cannot afford to avoid addressing situations that threaten international peace and security, such as the recent case of Lebanon. Pitifully, we witnessed a case of the inaction of the Security Council, a body charged with the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. That state of affairs only reaffirms the need to reform the Security Council, with regard to its working methods and the enlargement of its membership. In that regard, Zambia reaffirms Africa's well-known position on the matter.

At this stage, I would be remiss if I did not mention the Great Lakes region, which is emerging from a protracted period of conflict, followed by a period of successful transition towards democracy. The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region will hold its second summit in Nairobi in December 2006, to adopt the draft pact on security, stability and development in the region. In that regard, we need the continued political and financial support of the international community to ensure its adoption.

It is important to confirm that the peacebuilding and development process in the Great Lakes region has

reached a very advanced stage at all the three-dimensional levels, namely: international partnership, regional ownership and national stewardship. The vision for integrated and sustainable human development in the Great Lakes region is now reassured. The cessation of conflicts in the region, has already fed into the collective will to transform the subregion into a place of sustainable peace, political security and development.

Extreme poverty and deprivation breed disease. The number of people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS and the deaths caused by AIDS have continued to grow in the world today. Furthermore, between 350 and 500 million people per year are exposed to malaria, which is estimated to be the number one cause of mortality in most developing countries.

Zambia, like many of the developing countries adversely affected by those diseases, supports all the efforts made by the international community in combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. We therefore welcome the creation of an international drug purchase facility to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. This will not only facilitate easy access to medicine but will also lower the costs and therefore benefit many countries, especially in the developing world.

Poverty in the world today accounts for many of the social and economic injustices that people are subjected to in many developing countries. Four years ago, a bargain was struck in Monterrey between developed and developing countries on the implementation of a comprehensive strategy bold enough to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Developed countries were urged to support those efforts with action on aid, trade and debt relief.

While we commend the developed countries for taking tangible steps to fulfil their commitments, we call upon them to do so as a matter of urgency. It is saddening to note that six years after the Millennium Declaration was signed, the majority of our people in Africa are still exposed to abject poverty and live on less than $1 per day. Although there has been significant progress in achieving the MDGs, much more remains to be done in order to reverse the negative trends of poverty and the continued marginalization of people across the world.

We call for the removal of the unjust multilateral trade system, which continues to hamper the fair participation of the developing and least developed countries in the global market. We would like to draw the attention of the Assembly to the role of our developing partners, particularly, in the quick and concrete implementation of the Doha Development Agenda. It should be pointed out that with fair trading practices, developing and least developed countries would take a significant step towards self-sustenance and reduce dependence on aid.

Furthermore, we welcome the outcome of the Gleneagles Summit, at which the leaders of the Group of Eight pledged to increase aid to Africa by $25 billion a year by 2010. We also express our gratitude to those leaders for extending and deepening debt relief to the poorest countries through the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative. That Initiative has resulted in 100-per-cent cancellation of the debt owed to the international multilateral financial institutions by the poor countries that have reached the completion point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. Zambia is one such country. In addition, our gratitude goes to the other cooperating partners for agreeing to expand aid to developing countries by approximately $50 billion. Those resources will indeed contribute to the advancement of the MDGs.

Although in the recent past we have seen an increase in the commitment of aid resources and action and a reaffirmation of the principle of mutual accountability, there is still an urgent need to ensure that aid is managed efficiently and used effectively for the achievement of the MDGs. It is equally important to closely monitor the donor commitments and aid flows targeted at achieving the MDGs that we have set for ourselves to improve the lives of the poor and most vulnerable in the global community. The people in the developing countries have been listening attentively to the promises that we have made in various international forums. They continue to monitor those commitments. Their expectations and aspirations are very high. It is therefore incumbent on us to ensure that those commitments and promises are fulfilled.

The twenty-first century has been declared the century for the development of Africa. Let us therefore show true commitment to that cause. In a world where there is no true partnership between the rich nations and the poor nations, there can be no global security, no universal justice, no human rights and no

meaningful development. More than ever before, all of us — rich and poor nations alike — have to work together to create a sense of equal partnership. We all need to fulfil our commitments within a given time frame and enter into new ones in order to reach our goal of a world free of hunger, extreme poverty and disease — indeed, a world where we can live in a secure, clean and sustainable environment.

The meeting rose at 7.05 p.m.